National Park Service
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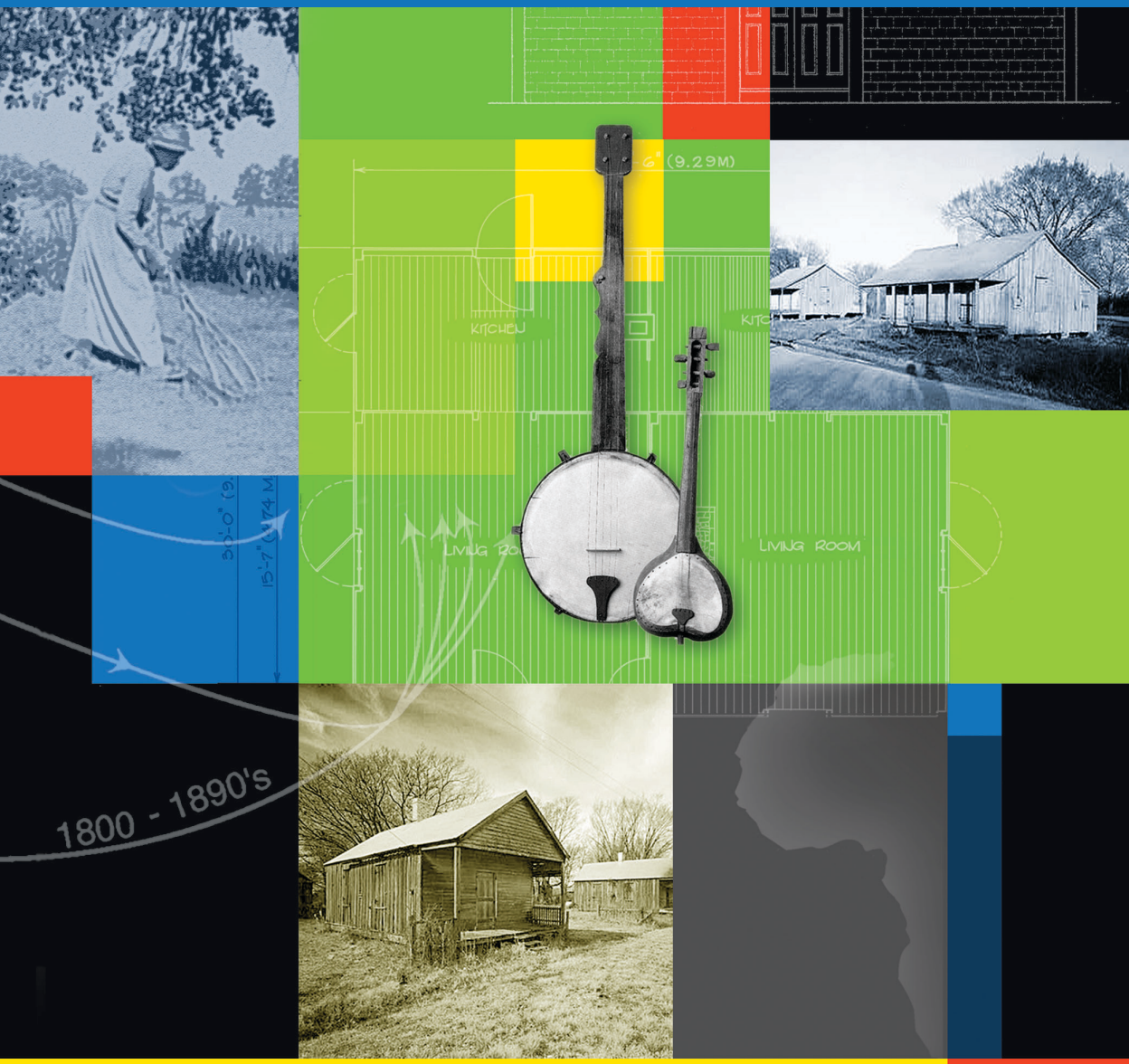
National Center for Cultural Resources

African Reflections on the American Landscape

IDENTIFYING AND INTERPRETING AFRICANISMS



Cover: Moving clockwise starting at the top left, the illustrations in the cover collage include: a photo of Caroline Atwater sweeping her yard in Orange County, NC; an orthographic drawing of the African Baptist Society Church in Nantucket, MA; the creole quarters at Laurel Valley Sugar Plantation in Thibodaux, LA; an outline of Africa from the African Diaspora Map; shotgun houses at Laurel Valley Sugar Plantation; details from the African Diaspora Map; a drawing of the creole quarters at Laurel Valley Sugar Plantation; a photo of a banjo and an African fiddle. Cover art courtesy of Ann Stephens, Cox and Associates, Inc.

Credits for the illustrations are listed in the publication.

This publication was produced under a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers.

African Reflections on the American Landscape

IDENTIFYING AND INTERPRETING AFRICANISMS

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National Center for Cultural Resources

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

2003

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

African Reflections on the American Landscape: Identifying and Interpreting Africanisms *highlights West and Central African cultural contributions to the nation's built environment that have been documented and recognized in the cultural resources programs of the National Park Service (NPS). This guide to Africanisms forms part of the larger effort of NPS and its partners to increase awareness of the role of various cultural groups in shaping the American landscape.*

Starting in the first third of the twentieth century, research on African Americans and their heritage increasingly focused on Africa for cultural antecedents. Throughout the social science fields, studies recognized that aspects of American culture had African roots called "Africanisms." Scholars examined the built environment of America and found it infused with reflections of Africa. Geographical locations held West and Central African names; structures reflected an African building aesthetic; and the land had been reshaped to take advantage of African technological and cultural knowledge. Both scholars and preservationists recognize that Africanisms should become better known in the historic preservation/cultural resources field.

This publication is intended to support historic preservation and cultural resources stewardship efforts of organizations and individuals within their communities. It is designed for the general reader, without a background in the study of Africanisms or West and Central African history and cultural practices. This document includes:

- An introductory essay that summarizes Africanisms and their origins;

- An annotated discussion of African-related historic properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places, designated as National Historic Landmarks, and documented by the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record (all programs of the National Park Service);

- Examples of historic sites where African cultural heritage is interpreted;

- A bibliography of well-known publications on the topic; and

- A more complete list of historic properties documented by National Park Service cultural resources programs, arranged by program and state.

African Reflections on the American Landscape summarizes highlights of the scholarship presented at the conference, "Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape," which was held May 9 - 12, 2001 in Atlanta, Georgia. It represents a follow-up to the conference because it illustrates ways in which this scholarship can be applied to historic preservation/cultural resources stewardship work.

Acknowledgments

This publication is an outgrowth of the conference, "Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape," which was held May 9 - 12, 2001, in Atlanta, Georgia. The National Park Service sponsored the conference in cooperation with other government agencies and private organizations. The conference addressed the influence of African cultural heritage on the built environment of the Americas in four thematic sessions and three panel discussions. (The conference proceedings are available through the National Park Service, National Center for Cultural Resources, 1849 C Street, NW [2251], Washington, DC 20240-0001 and is available online at www.cr.nps.gov/crdi.)

The "Places of Cultural Memory" conference developed from an idea posed by Falona Heidelberg, former Executive Director of the African American Experience Fund at the National Park Foundation. She was concerned that there was much about African cultural heritage in the United States that received scant attention from the historic preservation/cultural resources field. Working in conjunction with Katherine H. Stevenson, Associate Director, Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships of the National Park Service, Ms. Heidelberg initiated a series of meetings on a proposed conference on the tangible aspects of African American history.

As the conference program evolved, three consultants were engaged to advise on the conference themes and prospective speakers. The interest and support of Professor Joseph E. Harris of Howard University, Professor LaVerne Wells-Bowie of Florida A & M University, and Professor John Vlach of The George Washington University provided the scholarly foundation for the conference program.

Antoinette J. Lee, Special Projects Manager, National Center for Cultural Resources, was assigned the responsibility of managing the conference development. Scott Whipple, now of the Maryland Historical Trust, coordinated the solicitation and review of abstracts during the early planning stages of the event. Later, Brian D. Joyner took over the compilation of conference papers. As the conference evolved, Lee suggested that NPS review historic properties with African connections in National Register listings, National Historic Landmarks designations, and HABS/HAER documentation projects. As compiled by Whipple, Joyner, and Lee, the initial list was not exhaustive, but provided examples of dozens of properties associated with African cultural heritage that were already documented and recognized. The list was annotated and distributed at the conference; it later formed the basis for this publication.

Many individuals contributed to content of *African Reflections on the American Landscape*. Audrey Brown, James Charleton, Terry Childs, Edward Dunson, Michèle Gates Moresi, Bernice Johnson-Reagon, Tara Morrison, Arleen Pabón, Anthony Parades, Warren Perry, Martin Perschler, Tracy Rone, Erika Seibert, Carol Shull, John Sprinkle, Barbara Tagger, Dan Vivian, and Sheila Waker reviewed drafts and provided important comments on the document. Ann Gibson assisted with the duplication of the African diaspora maps. Joseph E. Harris gave his permission to use these maps in the publication. Michael Twitty generously loaned many books from his own personal library. Finally, the participants in the "Places of Cultural Memory" conference provided inspiring scholarship and fielded eloquent discussions on Africanisms in America leading up to and through the Atlanta conference.

Chapter 1

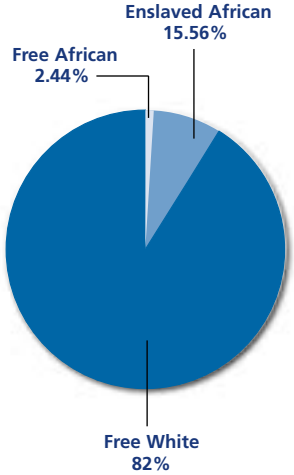
Africa in America: An Introduction

Since its origins, what is now the United States has been a nation of immigrants. Its populace is derived of people from countries all across the globe. Hundreds of indigenous American Indian tribes were already present in the sixteenth century when several European groups and a sizable number of Africans began to arrive. Later, groups from Asia, the Middle East, Central and South America, and many other corners of the globe arrived on the North American continent and made it their home. This phenomenon continues today, where new Americans arrive in the United States, adapt their cultures to the environment of the New World, and transform the national culture of the United States.

Illustration 1

1830 Census

Percent of the United States' 12.8 million person population by race.



*Less than one percent of population was alien (foreign born, not naturalized).

†Native Americans were not enumerated in the census until 1870.

Source: United States Historical Census Browser, compiled by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.

Of all the ethnicities, West and Central African emigrants comprised one of the largest groups to arrive in the United States during the colonial era.* Seventeenth and eighteenth century ship ledgers and insurance rolls teem with names of the various West and Central African ethnic groups: Wolof, Fon, Yorubá, Igbo, Fang, Mandinka, and Kongo, to name a few. African people were found throughout the American colonies, from Maine to Florida, and Mexico to Canada. By 1830, the U.S. census indicates that 2.3 million of the 12.8 million people in the United States were of African descent.[1]

Given the large number of Africans in the United States, African culture contributed greatly to the cultural and historical composition of America. The people themselves brought scientific and technological knowledge systems from West and Central Africa. African thought and creativity interacted with European cultural practices and influenced the language and the creative arts. More subtle influences include geographical

* "Emigrant," as opposed to "immigrant," is used to denote the forced migration of West and Central Africans to the European colonies in America.

place-names with African etymologies. The imprint of Africa on America is a major, and unique, factor in making this American culture.

Illustration 2:
Africanisms are "elements of culture found in the New World traceable to an African origin" as with the African gourd and animal skin covered fiddle *(above right)* that, by the 1800s, had evolved into the American banjo *(above left)*.

Photo courtesy of the Blue Ridge Institute and Museums

To further the recognition of African influence on American culture, the National Park Service published this document to summarize current scholarship, cite examples of African-influenced places in its cultural resources programs, and offer a resource list for groups and individuals interested in this topic. The publication provides examples of African cultural heritage in the United States and how Africanisms are interpreted at historic sites. The purpose of this publication is to encourage a greater understanding of Africanisms, aspects of culture found in the New World with African antecedents. In addition, it is hoped that this publication will encourage a stronger connection between historic preservation activity and academic research in the study of Africanisms.

What are Africanisms?

As defined by Holloway in *Africanisms in American Culture*, Africanisms are "elements of culture found in the New World traceable to an African origin."[2] Africanisms manifest themselves in numerous aspects of American culture. From language to architecture, they surround us. Some are easily identifiable, like Congo Square, now a part of Louis Armstrong Park in New Orleans. Others, like dugout canoes in the Chesapeake, are not as easily recognized. They show up in how Americans cook and what they eat, for example, gumbo and rice. Other foods like watermelon, black-eyed peas, sorghum, and millet entered into American foodways from Africa. In the arts, jazz, blues, and rock-and-roll are stamped with African influences, as is bluegrass, with its signature instrument, the banjo, being of African origin. As often as not, how a space was used is an Africanism, as in the case of the African Burial Ground in New York, or the use of a crossroad for a religious ceremony.

Identifying Africanisms may require additional research and analysis beyond a direct one-to-one connection with Africa. The context for a place or an object may be recognized as African American, but the African cultural connection will need further illumination and documentation. Interpreting a site or park's Africanity may mean explaining the migration process by which the people found themselves in certain locations. It may also mean examining aspects of West and Central African practices, as well as material culture.

The questions that creolization raises are: when do cultures begin to meld and what is it that each brings to the confluence?

The study of Africanisms is tied to the study of African American history, and more directly to the study of creolization of African and European cultures, which is the essence of African American culture. The questions that creolization raises are: when do cultures begin to meld and what is it that each brings to the confluence? As it concerns African Americans, creolization encompasses the relationship of African to African American, Afro-Caribbean to African American, and African and Native cultures to European culture, and vice versa. Historian and poet Edward Kamau Brathwaite describes creolization as "a cultural action—material, psychological and spiritual—based on the stimulus/response of individuals within the society to their environment…to each other."(3) Anthropologists James Deetz, in *In Small Things Forgotten*, and Grey Gundaker, in *Signs of Diaspora/Diaspora of Signs*, use creolization as a way to discuss African cultural reflections within American culture.(4) Scholars, such as John Vlach, view America as having a triple heritage—African, European, and Native American. The resulting blended culture is crucial to interpreting American material culture.(5) Thus, Africanisms are rarely "pure" transfers of African culture to the Americas, but a blending with other cultures to produce the unique American culture.

Scholarship on Africanisms

The study of Africanisms gained academic currency in the last 60 years with Melville J. Herskovits' seminal work published in 1941, *The Myth of the Negro Past*.(6) Herskovits, an anthropologist, argued for the role of Africans in the development of the culture of the Americas. His research challenged the widespread belief that there were no African roots in North American or even African American culture. Herskovits' work was a response to the work of sociologist E. Franklin Frazier. In his 1939 publication, *The Negro Family in the United States*, Frazier theorized that African Americans lost any sense of heritage or unique culture due to the devastating effects of slavery, although he acknowledged that African cultural retentions were strong in Latin America and the Caribbean.(7) Frazier's point-of-view prevailed in much of scholarly work until the rebirth of interest in African culture following the rise of Black Studies programs in colleges and universities in the 1960s and 1970s.

The search for and discussions regarding African influences did not originate with Frazier and Herskovits, but the Frazier-Herskovits debate played out against a developing backdrop of other scholarly endeavors. Historian Elizabeth Donnan edited a collection of ships' records and other documents dealing with the slave trade for the Carnegie Institution. *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, published in four volumes from 1930-1935, provided demographic information as to the magnitude of the trade and destinations of Africans involved.[8] Anthropologist and author Zora Neale Hurston collected folk tales, songs, and information on voodoo in an anthropological field study of southern African Americans in the late 1920s. The compilation, *Mules and Men*, published in 1935, noted motifs in storytelling, and aspects of spirituality that resembled West African antecedents.[9]

Illustration 3:
Bob Lemmons was born enslaved in Texas around 1850. He travelled with his master and cattlemen during the Civil War searching for new range, and claims to have known border outlaws like Billy the Kid. This photo was taken in 1936 at Carrizo Springs, Texas.

Photo courtesy of Farms Security Administration photographs collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

The federal government participated in documenting Africanisms in a manner similar to Hurston's field study. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) undertook an oral history survey of over 2,000 formerly enslaved men and women in 17 states, from 1936 to 1938. The WPA Slave Narrative Collection is filled with primarily first-person accounts from the formerly enslaved African Americans. *Drums and Shadows*, a collection of interviews conducted by the WPA Georgia Writers' Project with African Americans on the Georgia coast, provided raw data about the persistence of African heritage in their culture during the 1930s.[10] Later, George Rawick collected the narratives into 19 volumes and an additional supplement series of 12 volumes, called *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*.[11] In 1949, Lorenzo Dow Turner's *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* documented the West and Central African language connections with the Gullah language spoken in coastal South Carolina.[12] These efforts preceded the national focus on the issues of race and equality. However, social forces would begin to commingle with academic scholarship.

The spirit of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s spilled into academia. Responding to African Americans' desire to see themselves represented in the history and culture of the United States, scholars began looking at slavery for information about African American culture. Historian Kenneth Stampp documented that slavery was not a paternalistic institution, but one of harshness and cruelty, which the enslaved actively rebelled against, in his 1956 book, *The*

Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-bellum South.[13] This sort of historiography represented a new trend, one focusing on the actions of groups and individuals previously without a voice in the historical record. In 1969, Philip D. Curtin's book *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, traced from where the various West and Central African ethnicities came who made their mark in the Americas.[14] Curtin's work added vital demographic statistics to the study of Africans in the New World. Archeologist Charles Fairbanks investigated slave cabins at the Kingsley Plantation, Florida in 1969-1971. The excavation documented the material culture of the enslaved African American community. It focused on African American material cultural practices and their confluence within the larger society's culture.[15]

Illustration 4:
Low fired, unglazed pottery called colono-ware has been found at slave quarters on plantations in Virginia and the Carolinas. Recent scholarship attributes its creation to an African, as well as Native American, pottery tradition. This mended shallow bowl, with a tooled rim and applied flat base, was excavated at the Henry House, (Site 44PW293), Manassas National Battlefield Park, Manassas, Virginia.

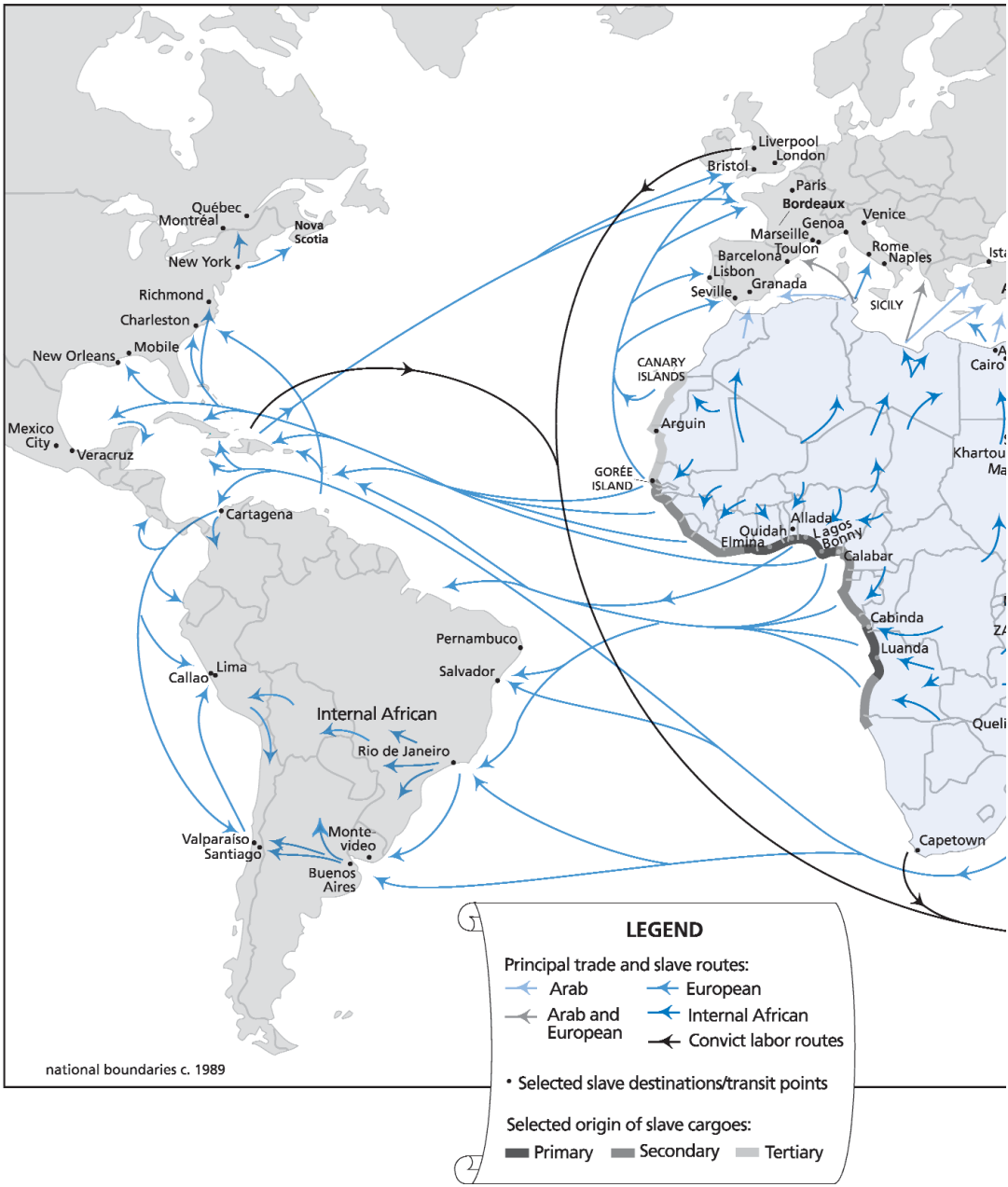
Photo courtesy of Mia Parsons.

The 1960s and 1970s saw colleges and universities around the country establish Black Studies programs, the first of which was launched at San Francisco State University in 1967. Concurrently, an increase of scholarship addressing African American culture and its roots arose. Some scholars such as historians John Blassingame, with *The Slave Community* in 1972, Eugene Genovese, with *Roll, Jordan, Roll* in 1974, and Lawrence Levine, with *Black Culture, Black Consciousness* in 1977, among others, examined the distinctive aspects of enslaved African culture and suggested Africa as one of the sources of that distinctiveness.[16] Anthropologists Sidney Mintz and Richard Price argued for a New World precedent for African American culture in their *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past*, published in 1976.[17] New research and new interpretations of slavery encouraged scholars to examine how enslaved African Americans preserved elements of their African heritage and how that manifested itself within the dominant culture.

Published in 1983, *Flash of the Spirit* by Robert Farris Thompson is arguably the most influential book on this topic since Herskovits' *The Myth of the Negro Past*.[18] Thompson's research on art and culture in the Afro-Caribbean/African American world encouraged an increased interest in Africanisms. In 1990, Leland Ferguson published *Uncommon Ground*.[19] Ferguson's research on colono-ware pottery in Virginia and the Carolinas revealed evidence of cultural syncretism: eighteenth-century material artifacts hold the imprint of West and Central African pottery skills and Native American design adapted to regional materials and European uses.

The African Diaspora Map – I

Based on research by Joseph E. Harris



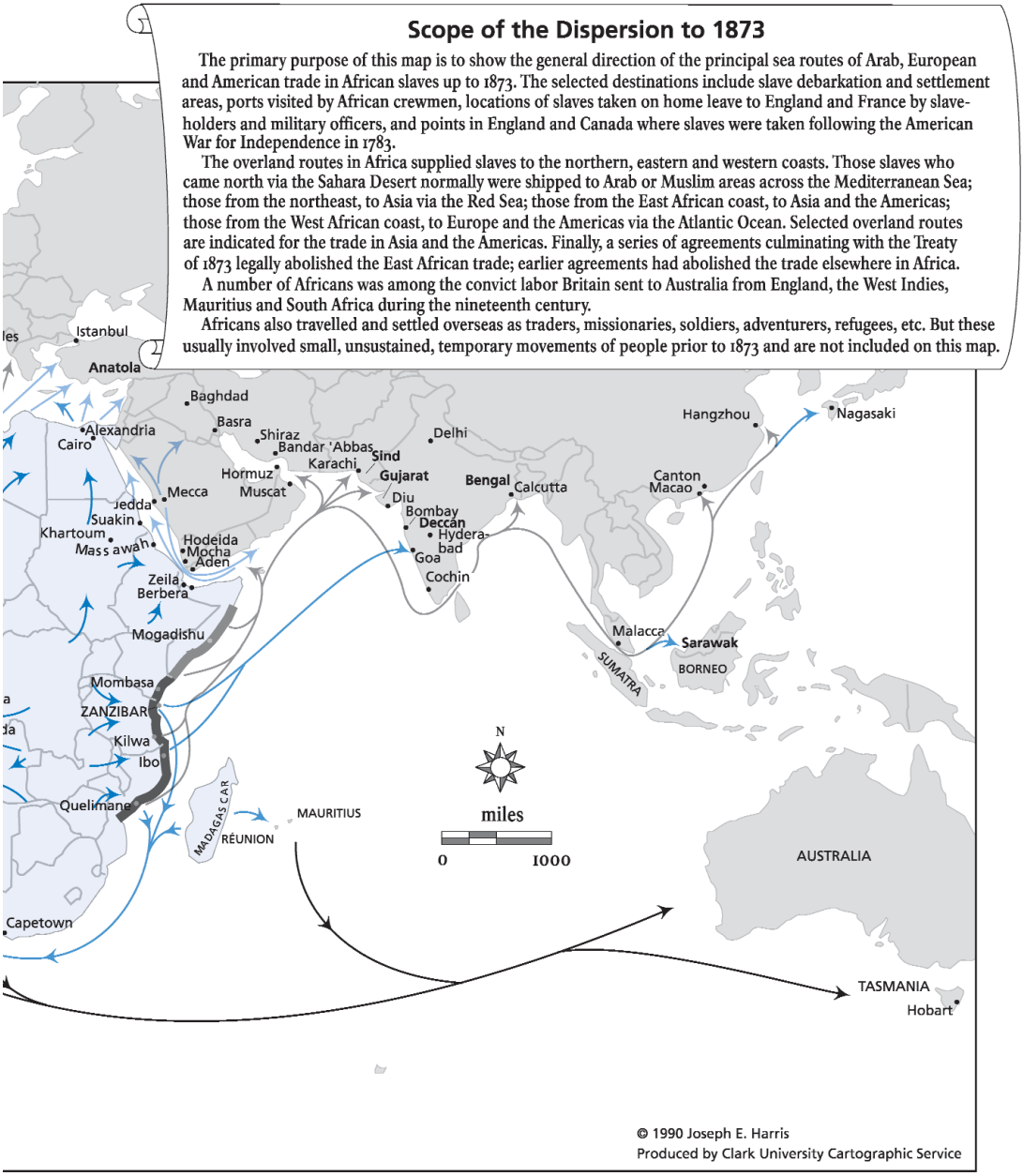
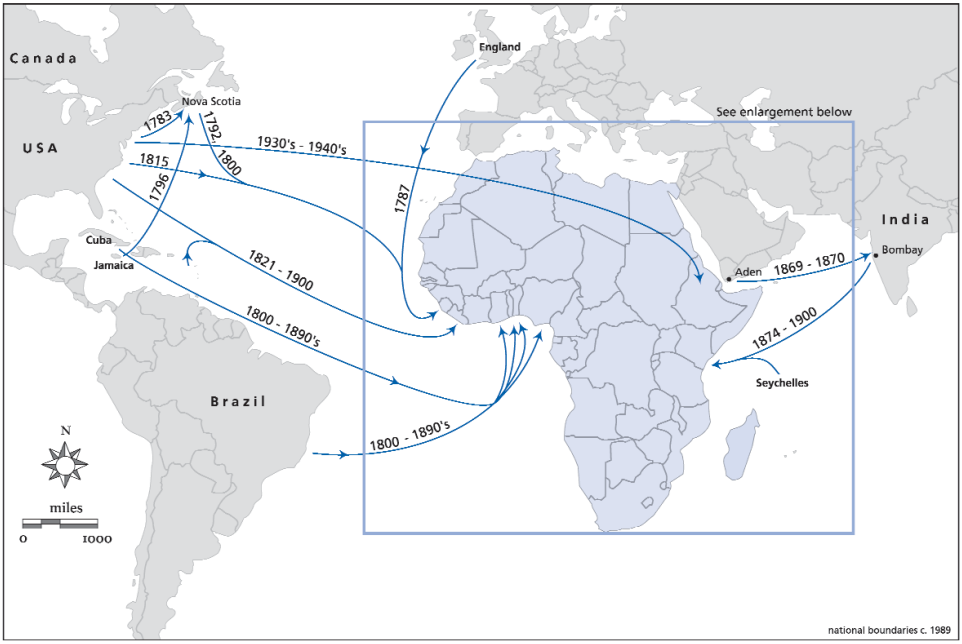


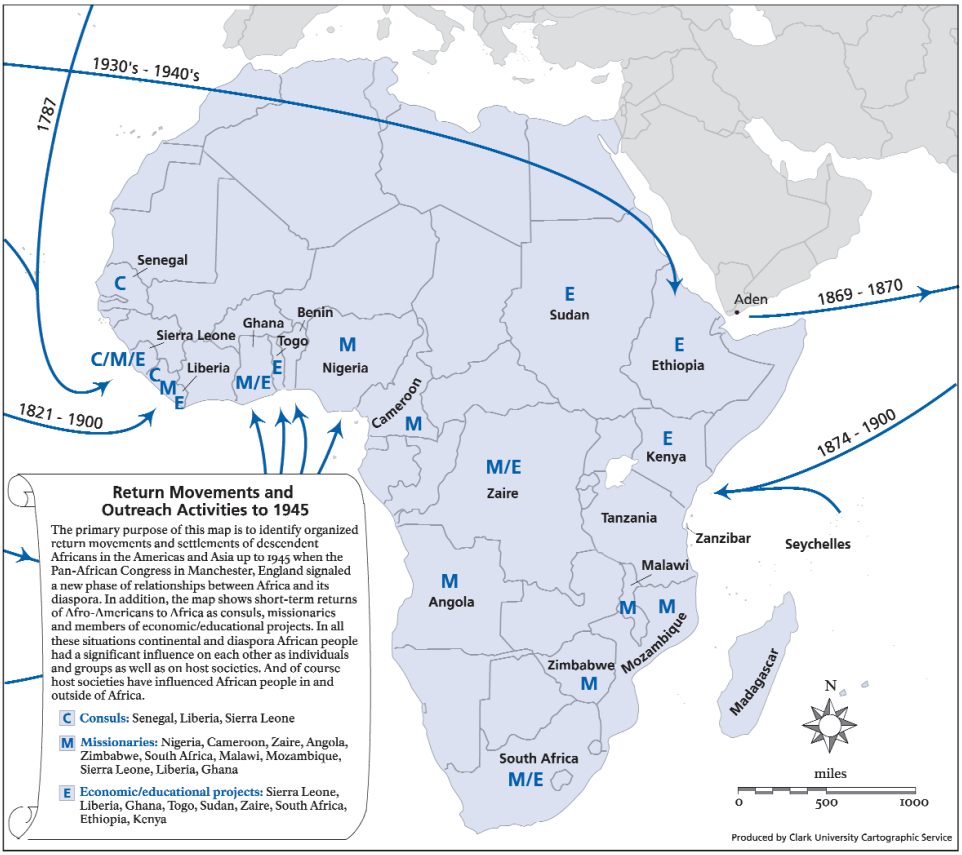
Illustration 5:
The African diaspora dates back close to two thousand years, and covers six of the seven continents.

Map courtesy of Joseph E. Harris

The African Diaspora Map – II

Based on research by Joseph E. Harris





Return Movements and Outreach Activities to 1945

The primary purpose of this map is to identify organized return movements and settlements of descendent Africans in the Americas and Asia up to 1945 when the Pan-African Congress in Manchester, England signaled a new phase of relationships between Africa and its diaspora. In addition, the map shows short-term returns of Afro-Americans to Africa as consuls, missionaries and members of economic/educational projects. In all these situations continental and diaspora African people had a significant influence on each other as individuals and groups as well as on host societies. And of course host societies have influenced African people in and outside of Africa.

- **C** **Consuls:** Senegal, Liberia, Sierra Leone
- **M** **Missionaries:** Nigeria, Cameroon, Zaire, Angola, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana
- **E** **Economic/educational projects:** Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Sudan, Zaire, South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya

Illustration 5a ***(left)*****:**
A phase of diasporic movement is a return of migrant groups to Africa.

Map courtesy of Joseph E. Harris.

In 1991, Joseph E. Holloway's *Africanisms in American Culture* provided a collection of interdisciplinary essays on Africanisms in the United States.[20] A professor of Pan-African studies, Holloway documented scholarly views on the influences of African culture on American and African American culture. Historian and folklorist John Vlach gave additional credence to African cultural retentions in the New World with his research on African vernacular architecture and material culture. Vlach reported their effects on African American and Afro-Caribbean architecture in *By The Work of Their Hands*, in 1991, and *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* in 1978.[21] Historian Mechal Sobel argued for reciprocal influences of African and European material cultures in *The World They Made Together*, published in 1987.[22] In 1992, historian Gwendolyn Midlo Hall published *Africans in Colonial Louisiana* that documented the presence and influence of Senegambians and their culture in the eighteenth century.[23] Scholarship by historian Joseph E. Harris presented a comprehensive look at the African diaspora, particularly using maps detailing the origins and destinations of African emigrants over the course of centuries. Furthermore, he argued for an inter-African melding, or syncretism, which recognizes the reflections of multiple African cultures and common African concepts and ideals within the Africa diaspora.[24] The cumulative effect of this scholarship was to make Africa in America visible again.[25]

African Dispersal and the African Diaspora

Africans and their collective communities found around the world constitute the African diaspora. The African diaspora refers not only to the Americas, but also to global migration over millennia. *(Illustrations 5 and 5a, pages 6-8; Table 1, page 10)* African communities can be found historically in Asia, Europe, and Australia. Large communities exist throughout the Americas (North, Central, and South) and the Caribbean. Indeed, Coptic monks from Egypt and Ethiopia resided in Rome during the Middle Ages. Moorish control in Spain lasted 700 years. Moors were Muslim Africans from northwestern Africa. Their most stunning monument, Alhambra, still stands in Granada. Habsi Kot was an Ethiopian fort in India, which contained the tombs of soldiers and nobles who fought with Malik Ambar, an Ethiopian commander who led a force of Africans and Asians to defend India in the seventeenth century. The Indian Ocean slave trade scattered Africans throughout Asia. Repatriate African communities were created in the Seychelles, in Bombay, and in Africa, such as Freretown, Kenya.

Countries in West and Central Africa Affected by the Atlantic Slave Trade*

Senegal	Ivory Coast	Benin	Congo
Gambia	Liberia	Nigeria	Angola
Guinea Bissau	Sierra Leone	Cameroon	Madagascar
Guinea	Ghana	Equatorial Guinea	Mozambique
Mali	Togo	Gabon	Tanzania

**The island of Madagascar is located off of the southeastern coast of Africa. Mozambique and Tanzania are in southeast Africa.*

Historical Regional Names for Areas of West and Central Africa, and their Coordinating Countries*

Historical Regional Name	Modern Country Names
Angola Coast *(Thornton)*	Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo, Angola
Gold Coast *(All sources)*	Ghana
Bight of Benin *(Gomez)*	Togo, Benin, part of Nigeria
Bight of Biafra *(Gomez)*	part of Nigeria, Cameroon, part of Gabon
Lower Guinea *(Thornton)*	Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon
Mozambique-Madagascar *(Gomez)*	Mozambique, Madagascar, Tanzania
Senegambia *(Gomez)*	Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea
Slave Coast *(Wolf)*	Bight of Benin
Upper Guinea *(Thornton)*	Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia
Central Africa *(Wolf)*	Gabon, Congo, Angola
Windward Coast *(Gomez)*	Sierra Leone, Liberia
West Africa *(Wolf)*	Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon

**The parenthetical names refer to bibliographical sources for the regional names.*

Sources: Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identity in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998); John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1440-1800*, Second edition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982).

Migration of Africans follows a pattern consistent throughout the diaspora. This migratory process has four stages: *primary* is the original dispersion; *secondary* is the move from initial settlement; *tertiary* is migration from the second settlement; and, *circulatory* is movement within several areas of diaspora, including Africa.[26] Viewed in the light of this process, it is apparent how a migration of people would mean migration of cultures. The more people moved around the diaspora, the more cultures were transmitted.

Table 1 and 1a *(left)*:
The area along the West Coast of Africa from which Africans enslaved in the Atlantic slave trade were drawn extends for 4,000 miles, from Senegal to Angola. Within the area are several regions, whose boundaries are not easily differentiated. Moreover, the names used to describe various regions have varied over time. The list at bottom left provides some of the more common names for the general regions, and the specific countries to which they refer.

The Atlantic slave trade provided the means of migration for the majority of Africans in the New World. The estimates, ranging from 9.6 to 15.4 million Africans removed from West and Central Africa, represent the largest forced migration of people in history.[27] Many Africans in Latin America and the Caribbean were relocated to North American colonies, from Florida to New Hampshire. All of the American colonies had African communities, enslaved or free. New York and Rhode Island have freed African descendant communities dating back to the 1700s, distinct from their southern counterparts.

Research shows that ethnic groupings in the southern United States corresponded to specific labor needs. In these places, the cultural retentions are strongest and are an abundant repository for Africanisms. Virginia and Maryland held the largest concentration of Africans in any one place in North America over much of the country's history.[28] South Carolina had a black majority by the beginning of the eighteenth century. The vast majority of African descendant people still reside in the southeastern section of the United States. Because of this consistency in the population, vernacular traditions associated with the early populations persist in these areas. The concentration of people of similar language and cultural groups in the same geographic area set up ideal circumstances for the retention of Africanisms.[29]

Some Africans voluntarily immigrated to America prior to the end of the Civil War. Cape Verdean seamen, for example, began immigrating to New Bedford, Massachusetts and working in the shipping trade in New England in 1860. After 1865, voluntary immigration from Africa and diasporic places such as the Caribbean, England, and France rose. Some recently freed African Americans left the South after the Civil War. Black exodusters, as they were called, created their own communities in California, Oklahoma, Texas, and Kansas. Cities such as New York, New Orleans, Washington, DC, and

Chicago saw a post-war influx of people of African descent. The Great Migrations of the 1920s moved African Americans from the South into industrial cities like Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. The Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965 accelerated this trend among diasporic African ethnic groups. There were earlier migrations back to Africa in the nineteenth century—to Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria—and to Canada as well—to the provinces of Nova Scotia, Quebec, and British Columbia.

Each African migrant group brought traditions that, while not identical, were similar and often had similar foundations. Cultural traditions, folding on to one another, began to intermingle. Several scholars cite a melding of African cultures in the Americas that took place among peoples from three main West African cultural zones: Upper Guinea, Lower Guinea, and Angola Coast.[30] Many of the people from these zones had interaction through trade and warfare prior to their re-introduction in the Americas. Prolonged exposure in the crucible of slavery further encouraged the process. The Caribbean and South American colonies had a predominance of Africans, and this fusion clearly affected the vernacular culture. Catholicized pre-Christian European feast days and festivals mixed with West Central African religious culture evolved into Carnivale in Brazil, Madri Gras in New Orleans, and Carabana in Toronto. Shotgun houses appeared in Louisiana with the arrival of free African immigrants from Haiti. A two-room housing form emigrated to the Caribbean with peoples from Bight of Benin, and merged with the Arawak Indian *ajupá* or *bohío* to form the Haitian *caille*. According to prevailing scholarship, the spatial volume of the shotgun and its Haitian prototype is identical to the housing type preferred by the Yorubá in Nigeria, West Africa.[31]

Africans in America

From the earliest settlements in the United States, diverse groups of people lived and worked in interdependent relationships that melded cultural, technological, and social traditions into a distinctive outlook that is American culture. With this, the New World became just that, a "new world," replete with new institutions, beliefs, and knowledge systems developed from the interaction of nationalities and cultures. The new culture reflected the input of the various participants in the growth of the colonies into a nation.

Africans have had a continuous presence in the Americas for more than 400 years.[32] Alonso Pietro was pilot of the Niña on the first voyage. A free African reportedly sailed with Columbus on the second voyage in 1493 as well.[33] Other Africans were among the Spanish exploration party that landed in the Carolinas in 1526 and were on hand after the English settled at Jamestown in 1619. The first documentation of free Africans in America was in 1662, in Northhampton, Virginia.[34]

Upon their arrival, Africans participated in the building of a nation. Joseph E. Harris notes:

> *[p]erhaps the greatest contribution of Africans abroad was labor, which facilitated the accumulation of capital, the advancement of technology, the internationalization of banking and insurance, and the general administrative organization, especially in the West…*[35]

African Americans did more than clear forests, dredge swamps, and serve as domestic help. Africans who arrived with the early settlers were blacksmiths, farmers, and potters, as well as sailors. African knowledge systems allowed for the development of commercially viable products, with which the wealth of a nation was built.

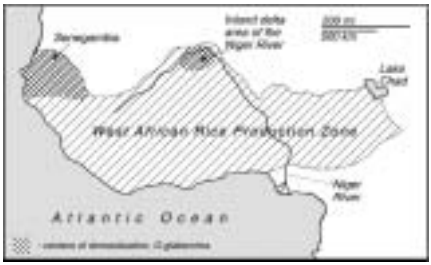


Illustration 6:
This illustration shows areas of rice cultivation in West Africa. The areas correspond with the origins of Africans brought to South Carolina during the height of rice production in the U.S.

Map courtesy of Judith Carney.

Many of the crops developed in the Americas for exportation were unfamiliar to the Europeans trying to cultivate them. Moreover, the crops were foreign to the region as well. However, enslaved African groups had experience with several of the different crops and technologies. As slavery became an entrenched institution, those in search of labor sought out Africans from regions with specific agricultural experience. The success of rice production in South Carolina, Georgia, and Louisiana was due to the tidal floodplain system of rice cultivation used in the Senegambia region. From 1730 to 1800, during the height of rice production, a significant number of Africans were imported from rice growing regions in West Africa. In Louisiana and South Carolina, the birth of the indigo industry coincided with the arrival of West Africans in 1721.[36]

Through daily activities and interactions, Africans made an imprint on American culture. African styles of cooking merged with European and Native American foodways. The use of rice, a staple of the West African diet, in the Americas is an Africanism. Other crops not developed for exportation,

like black-eyed peas and yams, were added to the European American palate. Archeological research at places such as Poplar Forest in Virginia, tells us much about the dietary and medicinal practices of Africans a generation or so removed from Africa. Single pot meals, like gumbo and jambalaya, are indicative of culinary Africanisms. The cooking utensils have African roots as well. Colono-ware, terracotta vessels used for cooking and storage, are found throughout Virginia and South Carolina. Research has identified a West Central African pottery tradition practiced in the United States, concurrent with the American Indian tradition.

Illustration 7:
According to some western African beliefs, seashells, like those found on a burial mound located in Mount Olivet Cemetery, Washington, DC, 1944 can represent water, the place where the spirits of the dead reside.

Photo courtesy of the Farm Security Administration photographs collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

African words and grammatical patterns permeate American English. "Okra" is an Akan word, and "gumbo" is a Bantu synonym. "Goober" and "jazz" are words derived from West African terms. Most famously, the Gullah dialect bears vocabulary and grammatical links to the Bantu language group. The creolization of English as spoken in the United States has much to do with the African influence upon the language. This influence would later show up in the idioms of blues, jazz, and rock-and-roll. African-derived place-names mark Suwanee Old Town, Florida and Wando River in the Gullah/Geechee region of South Carolina.

The Significance of Place

Place, according to Yi-Fu Tuan, is defined by the experiential perspective people have of a space.(37) The experiences of those who occupied an area are what makes that place significant to them, and in its interpretation to others. In the early years of United States, the ability to define one's space was limited to those with the means to wealth and power. African Americans were frequently without either, but through a sense of place, borne of collective experiences, found other means.

Living spaces were one way to mark place. Archeology in locations from the Caribbean to New England have found derivations in the footprints of housing constructed by transplanted Africans and that of European housing. The room sizes—12 feet wide for each room in Afro-Carribean and African American built places, as opposed to the 16 feet standard of European American housing—differ, creating more intimate, protected places.(38) Porches were adapted to European architecture in the Caribbean as a means to manage the heat of the tropics. They were the bridge between public and private space, and also served as an additional room for storage.

Illustration 8:
Interpreted through western African cosmology, the bottles and jars atop a sharecropper's grave in Hale County, Alabama, 1938 symbolize the connection between the living and the dead.

Photo courtesy of the Farm Security Administration photographs collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

Swept earth "yards," commonplace in West, Central, and East Africa, were widespread in the Caribbean, the Appalachians, and in the southern U.S. through the beginning of the twentieth century. These yards help define the ends of the outside world and the beginning of a personal, experience-influenced space.[39]

Illustration 9:
Swept yards were common in rural areas in the South. The practice is traced back to West Africa. Caroline Atwater, pictured tending to her yard with the branch from a tree in 1939, maintains a tradition dating back hundreds of years.

Photo courtesy of Farms Security Administration photographs collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

The significance of a location did not necessarily lie in the physical space itself, but in how the space was used. What happened in these places also gives them historical value. Churches in historically black neighborhoods can be repositories for information on early African descendant peoples. African American Christianity has decidedly different overtones than that practiced in European American communities. The rituals have a basis in West and Central African spiritual practices, which encouraged dancing, lively singing, and a call-and-response style of participation. Also, "church" did not always take place in a church or physical structure. Other domiciles or forest and wooded areas served as places to congregate.

At several archeological sites around the nation, cosmograms have been found in and beneath dwellings, most recently in Brooklyn, New York. According to Central African belief systems, cosmograms are graphical depictions of the universe. They were drawn in the soil, on walls, or on pottery. In its most basic expression, a cosmogram is a cross (+), with the horizontal line representing the divide between the world of

the living and the world of the departed. The vertical line shows the height of worldly power above the horizon, and the height of spiritual power below it.[40] In the case of the Lott home in Brooklyn, corncobs used to construct a cosmogram were discovered in the attic where the enslaved inhabitants resided.[41]

Personal effects and other items at gravesites and other funerary practices from Ghana to Angola found correlative practices throughout the eastern seaboard and the southern states. *(Illustrations 7 and 8, pages 14 and 15)* Descriptions of funerals and graves at the African Burial Ground in New York pointed to distinctly African funerary practices. Contemporary accounts of chanting and drumming and remains of pottery and/or seashells found on the graves date to the late seventeenth/early eighteenth centuries.[42]

Conclusion

People of African descent have been partners in the creation of America and American culture from its outset. The sheer numbers of African people who arrived in North America either from the Caribbean or directly from Africa to North America dictate a sizable role in the cultural development of America. African culture contributed greatly to the development and enrichment of the culture now identified with the United States.

Africanisms must become much more visible to historic preservation/cultural resources practitioners. In order to reach this visibility, preservationists must direct their efforts toward non-European historical sources. They must gain a better understanding of the various African ethnic groups and where their initial and subsequent settlements in America placed them.

ENDNOTES

1. The Historical United States Census Data Browser gives 2,300,031 and Michael Gomez gives 2,328,642 for the number of Africans in America in 1830. This represents 18% of the population in the United States. See "The Historical United States Census Data Browser" web site, available through the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research at http://fisher.lib.virginia. edu/census: February 12, 2002; Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 22, table 2.4.

2. Joseph E. Holloway, ed., *Africanisms in American Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), ix.

3. Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1971). Grey Gundaker addresses creolization theory in her essay, "Discussion: Creolization, Complexity, and Time," in *Historical Archaeology* 34(3)2000: 124-133.

4. James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1996); Grey Gundaker, *Signs of Diaspora/Diaspora of Signs: Literacies, Creolization, and Vernacular Practice in African America* (Oxford, UK and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

5. John Michael Vlach, *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 125; John Michael Vlach, *By the Work of Their Hands: Studies in Afro-American Folklife* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 201-206. Cf. Merrick Posnansky's discussion of African and Indian knowledge exchanges in the Caribbean and Ferguson on slavery and racism in the Chesapeake Tidewater region. Posnansky, "West Africanist Reflections on African American Archaeology," in Theresa Singleton, ed., *I, Too, Am America: Archaeological Studies of African-American Life* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 21-37; Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 41-44.

6. Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941).

7. E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939). Frazier's work was a response to W.E.B. Du Bois's examinations into African American culture and life. Cf. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1638-1870* (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1896); idem, *The Philadelphia Negro* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1899); idem, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903).

8. Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 4 volumes (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930-1935).

9. Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (Philadelphia and London: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1935).

10. Georgia Writers' Project, *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies among the Georgia Coastal Negroes* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1940).

11. George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, 31 volumes (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1972-1979).

12. Lorenzo Dow Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1949).

13. Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-bellum South* (New York: Knopf, 1956).

14. Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade, A Census* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970).

15. Charles Fairbanks, "The Kingsley Slave Cabin in Duval County, Florida," in the *Conference on Historic Sites Archaeology Papers* (n.p., 1975), 30-59.

16. John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (Oxford, UK and New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1974); Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture, Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (Oxford, UK and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). These are not the only scholars of note on the topic of slavery. Nor are they the only scholars of slavery with contributions to the study of Africanisms. Charles Joyner, Ira Berlin, Sterling Stuckey, Charles Dew, and many more, have contributed substantially to the examination African American culture and its African antecedents. See the bibliography for more citations.

17. Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976). Mintz and Price argued that Africanisms did not "survive," reviving the notion that African American culture was created without the influence of Africa. The book has been re-released, with additional information and a new title, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

18. Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1983).

19. Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground*.

20. Holloway, *Africanisms in American Culture*.

21. *Afro-American Tradition* was originally published by the Cleveland Museum of Art to accompany an exhibit in 1978. See Vlach, *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1978). Idem, *The Afro-American Tradition*; idem, *By the Work of Their Hands*.

22. Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

23. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

24. Joseph E. Harris, ed., *The Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982); Joseph E. Harris, *Africans and Their History*, (New York: New American Library, 1972).

25. For many years, Africa and her ethnicities were not a part of the early story of American culture. A view of Africa (and Africans) as a receiver, not donor, of culture was pervasive, beginning in the eighteenth century. The "culturally rich" portions of Africa, Egypt and North Africa, were cleaved from it, aligning Egypt with Europe and North Africa with Arabia. The perception of Sub-Saharan Africa as a savage continent in need of enlightenment allowed for the paternalistic beliefs that, among other things, gave credence to the notion slavery would serve as a civilizing tool. For brief discussions on the invisibility of Africa in history, see Nnamdi Elleh, *African Architecture: Evolution and Transformation* (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1997) 4-6; Harris, *Africans and Their History*, specifically the chapter titled "A Tradition of Myths and Stereotypes."

26. Harris, ed., "Introduction," in *The Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982), 8-9.

27. The estimates for the total number of Africans imported as chattel into the New World range widely. A lack of complete records and the continued illegal importation of enslaved Africans beyond the cessation of slavery throughout colonies in North America and the Caribbean skew the numbers. Commonly held totals and estimates ranged from 15 to 20 million people, until the publication of Philip Curtin's book *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*. Curtin's groundbreaking research puts the estimate at 9.6 million. His statistics are widely used by

scholars as the best available estimates. Since *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, others, such as sugar technology historian Noel Deerr and economic historian Joseph Inikori suggested higher totals of 12 and 15.4 million, respectively. Hugh Thomas sums up much of the scholarship and statistics in Appendix 3 of his book, *The Slave Trade*. He estimates 11,328,000 arrived in the New World, with a total of 13 million leaving West African ports. See Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 87, table 23; Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440-1870* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 804-805, 861-862. Cf. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 18, who confirms Curtin's figures with a comparison to other studies; Noel Deerr, *History of Sugar*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1950); Joseph Inikori, *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa, and the Americas* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981).

28. The number, 673,037 free and enslaved Africans in Virginia and Maryland, is based on the 1830 estimated census data. The number of Africans in the Chesapeake region is consistently higher than any other area in census records from 1710 to 1860. See "The Historical United States Census Data Browser" web site, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/census; Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 295.

29. Levine argues that although the different languages among the various ethnicities required adaptation techniques, there was a cultural commonality among the enslaved West Africans, and that it persisted and evolved. See Levine, *Black Culture*, 3-5.

30. John Thornton argues for a cultural syncretism among the West and Central African ethnic groups. Harris acknowledges the inter-African cultural melding that took place. John K. Thornton, *Africa and African in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, second edition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 187-192; Harris, "A Comparative Approach," in *The Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982), 113-114. Cf. Harris, *Africans and Their History* for discussions of interaction between various ethnic groups within West and Central Africa.

31. Vlach, in "The Shotgun House: An African Architectural Legacy," outlines the development and transmission of the shotgun house form from the Yorubá in Nigeria to French Africans arriving in Louisiana with the Haitian *caille* during the early eighteenth century. See Vlach, *By the Work of Their Hands*, 185-213.

32. For an alternate perspective, see Ivan Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus: The African Presence in Ancient America* (New York: Random House, 1976). In his work, Van Sertima offers an argument for pre-Columbian contact between East and West Africans and Mezo-Americans in Central America, relying on historic records, and examination of monumental sculpture and similarities between Aztec and Egyptian calendars. Van Sertima's research is controversial and has been disputed by other scholars, but is worth noting, because it cites two different periods of potential interaction over several centuries.

33. For Pietro and other Africans on board with Columbus, see Thomas, *The Slave Trade*, 87.

34. Kwame A. Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds. *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 783.

35. Harris, "A Comparative Approach," 123.

36. See Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 124.

37. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 8-18.

38. See Vlach's discussion on African-American housing, in *The Afro-American Tradition*, 122-138; also see Arleen Pabón, "Por La Encendida Calle Antillana: African Influences on Puerto Rican Domestic Architecture," in *Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape. Conference Proceedings, May 9-12, 2001, Atlanta, GA* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2001), 139-143.

39. See Richard Westamcott, "Gardening, Yard Decoration, and Agriculture Among Peoples of African Descent in the Rural South and in the Cayman Islands," in *Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape. Conference Proceedings, May 9-12, 2001, Atlanta, GA* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2001), 135-138. Cf. Westamcott, *African American Gardens and Yards in the Rural South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

40. In his discussion on cosmograms, Thompson describes the different iterations of cosmograms, to include crossroads. According to Thompson, it was where one went to gain favor from the cosmos and to reach ones ancestors. Forked sticks could also serve as a cosmogram. See Robert Farris Thompson, "Kongo Influences on African-American Artistic Culture," in *Africanisms in American Culture*, Joseph E. Holloway, ed., (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 152-157.

41. For more on the Lott home findings, see H. Arthur Bankoff, Christopher Riccardi, and Alyssa Loorya, "Remembering Africa Under the Eaves," in *Archaeology* 54(3)(May/June 2001): 36-40; Brent Staples, "To Be a Slave in Brooklyn," in *New York Times Magazine* (June 21, 2001): 34-37.

42. Shells were found on some coffins, and the presence of pottery on at least one other. See Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Ruth Mathis "New York's African Burial Ground Mortuary Complex in Diasporic Perspective," in P*laces of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape. Conference Proceedings, May 9-12, 2001, Atlanta, GA* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2001), 147-150.


1800 - 1880's

Chapter 2

Identifying and Documenting Africanisms on the American Landscape

Through its cultural resources programs, the National Park Service has identified and formally recognized many historic places associated with African cultural heritage. African-related historic properties have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, designated as National Historic Landmarks, documented through the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, and addressed in conferences, such as "Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape." This chapter provides a preliminary list of such historic places and summarizes their connection to African culture.

The properties that have been recognized by NPS cultural resources programs include those that:

- are representative of ethnic heritage, as in the case of Congo Square
- embody distinctive characteristics, such as the shotgun homes in the Smoketown Historic District
- are associated with events and persons that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of our history, such as the Stono River Slave Rebellion Site, and
- may yield or are likely to yield information important in prehistory or history, such as the African Burial Ground.

The list suggests the types of historic places that communities might consider for formal documentation and recognition.

The National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's inventory of historic districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture at the national, state, and local levels. The National Register contains almost 75,000 properties and with nearly 1.2 million historic resources within those properties.

Congo Square

New Orleans, Louisiana

As a gathering place for the enslaved population of New Orleans, Congo Square's significance lies in the events that took place there. On Sundays, enslaved people congregated at the plaza, just across the street from the French Quarter, as a respite from their daily toil. The dance and music ceremonies performed at Congo Square are integral to much of contemporary African American popular culture, and American popular culture. Descriptions of the dances, instrumentation, and songs, most notably by architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe during a visit in 1819, correspond with West African antecedents. The National Register nomination makes frequent reference to the importance of Africa to this place.[1]

Illustration 10:
An aerial view of Congo Square in New Orleans shows the circular pattern intended to mimic the dances, as described by Latrobe, of the Africans who spent their leisure time there.

Photo courtesy of the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

The founding of the colony of Louisiana by the French dates to 1702, and the first people of African descent arrived in 1719. By 1728, the Africans were almost exclusively from the Upper Guinea region, specifically Senegal and Gambia, which provided a homogeneous African identity.[2] Spanish rule in Louisiana dates from 1763 to 1800 and during this time the use of the Congo Square by Africans may have begun. The Spanish regime was more progressive than the French or English in their treatment of the enslaved Africans and was willing to allow them more autonomy and free time.

Today, the plaza still embodies the African influence. It is paved with an overlapping circular pattern in the brick courtyard intended to imitate the dances performed by Africans.(*Illustration 10)* As stated in the summary of the National Register nomination, "[t]his public open space is significant as the site, during the early 19th century, of traditional slave dances consciously preserving African dance patterns and musical instruments." Congo Square, as a public space, serves as a cultural landscape, important for its ethnic heritage in the culturally diverse city of New Orleans.

Smoketown Historic District

Louisville, Kentucky

Illustration 11:
The 700 block of E. Breckenridge Street contains examples of camelback shotgun houses and single shotgun houses in the Smoketown Historic District in Louisville.

Photo courtesy of Roy Hampton

The Smoketown district is located in the easternmost section of central Louisville. An ethnically diverse neighborhood since its inception, Smoketown is an African American community that predates the Civil War. Originally, the area was settled by Quakers, followed by people of German descent, which were the most dominant cultural group until the late 1800s. The neighborhood saw an increased influx of African Americans after the Civil War, making it the largest continuously occupied African American community in Louisville. Its longevity exceeds that of two other communities serving people of African descent, Browntown and Little Africa, in other sections of the city.

Illustration 11a:
On the 900 block of S. Hancock Street, double shotgun houses sit side by side in the Smoketown Historic District.

Photo courtesy of Roy Hampton

The city and neighborhood were places of tertiary migration. People came from all over the South due to the belief that abolitionist General John Palmer, commander of the Union forces in the area, would emancipate all African Americans present in Louisville on July 4, 1865. This migration continued, providing labor for the burgeoning industrial complex in Louisville. Smoketown was bordered by several factories, including a tobacco processing factory, which was the largest industry.

Smoketown has a large number of shotgun houses, a popular house type in industrial Louisville following the Civil War. The shotgun is derived from a Yorubá housing type via Haiti. The Yorubá house melded with the Arawak Indian *ajupá* or *bohío* to create the Haitian *caille*. From Haiti, it came to Louisiana with the influx of free Africans. Shotgun houses are narrow (roughly 12 feet wide), 2 to 3 rooms deep, aligned with the gable and front door facing the street, which are distinctive parts of the design. Theoretically, one could open all the doors

of the house, fire a bullet through and not disturb anything, hence "shotgun." The shotgun house form traveled from Louisiana, up the interior waterways to Kentucky, Ohio, and Missouri with African Americans from the lower South. This housing type became popular in industrialized southern urban areas following the Civil War, when housing was needed in densely populated areas.

According to the National Register nomination, shotgun houses could be found as early as 1855 in this section of Louisville. *The Encyclopedia of Louisville* notes that the city of Louisville has four types of shotguns: single, double (two single-shotgun houses combined under one roof), camelback (with an additional story over the back room), and double camelback.[3] *(Illustrations 11 and 11a, page 25)* Presently, the shotgun house makes up approximately ten percent of the city's housing stock.

Christiansted Historic District

St. Croix, Virgin Islands

The Danish were the first of the European countries to develop a successful commercial endeavor on the island of St. Croix. Enslaved Africans played a significant role in the development of the port town of Christiansted. They were employed as artisans and assisted in the construction of the many buildings found in the district. Hipped roof, single-story rectangular buildings with porches dot the landscape of the district. *(Illustration 12)* The building type is reminiscent of housing types from Ghana. The Africans in Christiansted passed through the Danish slave forts in what is now Ghana.[4]

Illustration 12:
A northwest view of Market Street shows hipped roof houses in the foreground and the background in Christiansted Historic District, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, circa 1976.

Photo courtesy of Samuel N. Stokes

Through the labor of enslaved Africans, the Danish were able to establish a successful sugar production and export enterprise with the Danish West India and Guinea Company. Sugar cane cultivation has North and West African antecedents. There was also a substantial free African population, which played an important role in the development of the town. "Free Gut" is a residential area that was established for free blacks. According to the National Register nomination, the enslaved population reached over 27,000 as compared with approximately 5,000 European settlers and planters. With the sizable African descendant population, Christiansted Historic District is a primary migration stage. It potentially holds significant historical information about the lives of Africans immediately arrived from West Africa.

National Historic Landmarks

Designated by the Secretary of the Interior, National Historic Landmarks are nationally significant historic places because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. 2,341 historic places bear this distinction.

African Burial Ground Complex

New York, New York

Illustration 13:
Archeological investigation at the African Burial Ground has uncovered numerous examples of grave markers, such as headstones and cobbles.

Photo courtesy of Dennis Seckler

The African Burial Ground Complex holds an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 people of African descent interred since the early eighteenth century. The Burial Ground was in use from approximately 1712 to 1785.(5) It was rediscovered during the construction of a federal office building.(6) Administered by U.S. General Services Administration, the site is marked with a commemorative plaque and statue called "Triumph of the Spirit." New York was the first place of contact with America for many of those interred. Therefore, the evidence found at the Burial Ground was interpreted through the lens of Africanisms.

Illustration 13a:
A tack-decorated coffin lid with "HW," with the date 17[3]8 was found during excavations at the African Burial Ground National Historic Landmark.

Photo courtesy of Dennis Seckler

The Burial Ground was an African place in New York. Anthropological research reveals the effects of the strenuous work regimes, dietary patterns, and genetic background of some of the earliest Africans in America. Archeological information illuminates the funerary practices of the various people: whether they were buried with or without a coffin, the orientation of their bodies to the cardinal points denoting religious affiliation, the personal objects that were interred with them, and the types of ceremonies that were conducted at the gravesite. All of these practices reveal much about the

ethnic background of those interred. *(Illustrations 13 and 13a, page 27)* The significance of the site is the link of cultural practices and items interred to West African people who were recently transported to the Americas.

Stono River Slave Rebellion Site

Near Rantowles, South Carolina

On September 9-10, 1739, a group of 20 enslaved Africans gathered near the Stono River and commenced one of the most serious slave insurrections in the colonial period. The rebellion traveled from farm to farm, gaining recruits, and killing slaveholders along the way to its intended goal, Spanish-controlled St. Augustine, Florida. The slaveholders in the area eventually put down the rebellion some 12 miles south of its origin. At the conclusion of the rebellion, more than 60 British settlers died, and 40 of the estimated 80 enslaved Africans perished in the days and weeks following the revolt.

According to contemporary sources, the Rebellion was led by an Angolan named Jemmy and contained a number of Angolans in the original group. The National Historic Landmark documentation cites a report that the band of insurrectionists marched "like a disciplined company." Accounts of the period note a banner, which the insurrectionists rallied around and from which they derived a source of confidence. Peter Wood, in *Black Majority,* references African traditions where some secret societies viewed banners as having protective abilities.[7]

The significance of a core group of people from the same general cultural zone cannot be underestimated. As a point of primary migration, South Carolina imported many Africans directly from Africa. Thus, cultural retentions were strong in South Carolina. Many of those sold into slavery were captives of wars between the rival African groups. They may have also shared mutually understandable languages. This familiarity allowed for a cohesiveness that was crucial to the relative success of the rebellion. Unlike other rebellions, there was no information leak or betrayal to the planters by any enslaved Africans in the Stono area. The insurrection led South Carolina to pass some of the most restrictive slave codes in the colonies. The National Historic Landmark property is being reevaluated for possible inclusion of the area where the Rebellion was finally stopped.

Historic American Buildings Survey

The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) documents important architectural sites throughout the United States and its territories. The program is an integral component of the federal government's commitment to historic preservation. HABS documentation, consisting of measured drawings, large-format photographs, and written history, plays a key role in accomplishing the mission of creating an archive of American architecture and engineering.

African Baptist Society Church
Nantucket, Massachusetts

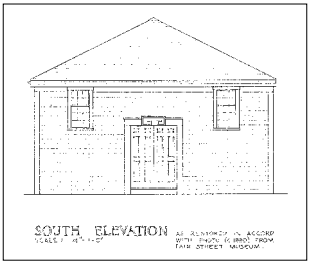


Illustration 14:
The African Baptist Society Church was measured and drawn as a part of the Historic American Building Survey program to record architecturally significant buildings throughout the nation.

Drawing courtesy of HABS

Illustration 14a:
The 1968 photo of the African Baptist Society Church shows the church sitting in contrast to other buildings in its surroundings.

Photo courtesy of Jack Boucher, HABS

The African Baptist Society Church, or African School as it was also known, is the oldest remaining building in Nantucket associated with peoples from West Africa. As late as the end of the Revolutionary War, one-third of the African descendant population in Massachusetts had been born in Africa, creating an African cultural presence in the commonwealth. The building is located on land bought in 1826 for $10.50 in a neighborhood called Newtown. The section of Newtown where the church resides was known as "Guinea." The name historically refers to a broad region of West Africa, ranging from the Senegal River in Senegambia to Cameroon, covering much of the area from which enslaved Africans came.[8] Throughout the eastern seaboard, references to black sections of towns that were called "Guinea" can be found.

In Clay Lancaster's *The Architecture of Historic Nantucket*, the African Baptist Society Church is cited as "noteworthy… built at the corner of Pleasant [Street]…to serve the colored colony to the west." Presumably built by members of the society, the building is unique to Nantucket, but bears resemblance to housing types found in the South where there were larger concentrations of people of African descent.(9) Photos of the surrounding homes and buildings show no structures of similar design. *(Illustrations 14 and 14a, page 29)*

The use of "colony" to describe the black population infers that they were free, or at least had some degree of movement. Slavery was abolished by the Massachusetts legislature in 1783, and according to William Piersen's *Black Yankees*, as much as 40% of the state's African population may have been free by 1764.(10)

Illustration 15:
An orthographic architectural drawing of double Creole quarters notes the adaptation of a porch to the double pen-type vernacular housing.

Drawing courtesy of HAER

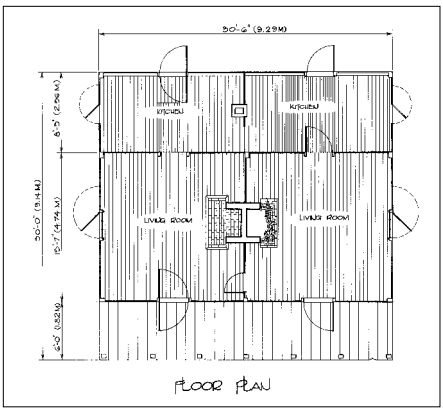


Illustration 15a:
This photograph illustrates a row of the Creole quarters housing at Laurel Valley Plantation.

Photo courtesy of Jet Lowe, HAER

Historic American Engineering Record

The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) documents important engineering and industrial sites throughout the United States and its territories. The program is an integral component of the federal government's commitment to historic preservation. HAER documentation, consisting of measured drawings, large-format photographs, and written history, plays a key role in accomplishing the mission of creating an archive of American architecture and engineering.

Laurel Valley Sugar Plantation

Thibodaux, Louisiana

Sugar production came to Louisiana in 1794. It was introduced to Louisiana from the Caribbean, where it had been commercially successful for the French, Dutch, Portuguese, and Danish. Laurel Valley Plantation is an example of a complete sugar-producing complex. The plantation contains a great deal of vernacular architecture of African derivation. In addition, knowledge systems transferred from the Caribbean, the Atlantic Islands, and Africa made sugar cultivation possible.(11)

The Boudreaux family settled on what was the Laurel Valley Plantation in 1831, seeking a fortune from the profitable, but labor-intensive sugar cane crop. The family eventually sold

Illustration 16:
This view illustrates a row of shotgun houses at Laurel Valley Plantation.

Photo courtesy of Jet Lowe, HAER

the property to Joseph Tucker in 1834, who expanded the production of the plantation. Laurel Valley eventually encompassed 5,000 acres. Tucker depended on the labor of enslaved Africans, increasing his number from 22 in 1831 to 160 by 1852.

Much of the original slave housing was destroyed by a later plantation owner and was replaced with double creole "T" quarters (a two-level, double pen house with a porch built in beneath the roof line) for workers. A "street" of double shotgun houses with porches, both African vernacular adaptations, includes 26 houses.*(Illustrations 15, 15a, and 16)* The shotgun houses are indicative of an established African-derived housing type, while the creole quarters point out a hybrid, merging architectural traditions that created a distinctive Southern housing type.

Places of Cultural Memory Conference

"The Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape" conference was held May 9-12, 2001 in Atlanta, Georgia. The conference presented recent scholarship on Africanisms in the built environment. It brought together preservationists and academicians interested in developing a fuller understanding of the influence of African cultural heritage on the landscape of the Americas. The papers are compiled as a single volume, *Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape, Conference Proceedings, May 9-12, 2001, Atlanta, Georgia* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2001), and are available on-line at http://www.cr.nps.gov/crdi/conferences/conflinks.htm.

Two of the presentations are summarized below.

"Interwoven Traditions: Archaeology of the Conjurer's Cabins and the African American Cemetery at the Jordan and Frogmore Manor Plantations"

Presented at the "Places of Cultural Memory" conference in Atlanta, Georgia, Kenneth L. Brown's paper speaks to the importance of understanding material culture as interpreted by the enslaved Africans, not just searching for items of African origin or design. Brown conducted archeological research on excavations of the slave quarters of two plantations in distinctly different locations, Texas and South Carolina. The excavations revealed cosmograms, graphical depictions of the universe according to West and Central African religious beliefs, at both sites. However, instead of a drawing or inscription on pottery, for example, the cosmograms were buried beneath cabins.

The cosmograms found at the Jordan Plantation, Brazoria County, Texas used various items, from thermometers to brass Confederate military buttons and coins (dimes and quarters). According to Brown, these lie outside of direct African interpretation, but are examples of adaptation of western material culture for African religious practices. The items were located in deposits at the four cardinal directions. Another interesting aspect of the Jordan Plantation site was that it showed a mix of two West and Central African cultural groups, BaKongo and Yorubá.[12]

According to Brown, the cosmogram found at the Frogmore Manor Plantation, St. Helena Island, South Carolina had fewer European American elements and could more readily be interpreted in West African contexts. The cosmogram was located under what is believed to be the Conjurer/Midwife's cabin at Frogmore Manor. Although glass, seashells, and nails were present, just as in the contents at the Jordan plantation, Brown notes the cosmogram deposits at the Frogmore Plantation have a more "African appearance" to them. The most notable distinction was the use of a fully articulated chicken and cow (save for its tail) in two of the four deposits. Cattle represent wealth in some African cultures, such as the Fulani in Nigeria, and chickens provide protection from spirits. Bottles and colono-ware with bottoms broken out were found along with the animals.[13]

The findings at the two plantations provide a means of comparison for research on similar locations throughout the South, and in places where African descendant people settled. In the Caribbean and South America, West African beliefs are common aspects of spirituality, and are more prevalent than in North America. Santería in Cuba, and Vodun, or Voodoo in Haiti, are examples of West African based beliefs, creolized in a Christian context. They are part of ongoing African reflections in the New World, which are being strengthened with the immigration of West African practitioners of traditional religious beliefs. Today, with increased numbers of Afro-Caribbean and African people moving to America, there is the potential for further cosmograms and items of worship to appear in art and as material culture artifacts, as well as those found "hidden from plain view."[14]

"Africanisms Upon the Land:
A Study of African Influenced Place Names of the USA"

In her paper, Annette Kashif examines the place-naming practices of African descendant people. Toponyms are reflections of a person or group's power and dominion over a place. In the instances where African descendant people held influence over the landscape, it follows that the names would hold African connotations. These places ranged from towns to rivers and swamps. Linguistic characteristics have proven less dependent on time and place to maintain a cultural relationship to Africa. Language patterns survive beyond the direct influence of original speakers, past their presence in a place. Therefore, Kashif's analysis goes beyond a one-to-one connection with African toponyms and places. This examination of toponyms encourages a broader interpretation of Africanisms, delving into more deep structure analysis, requiring further understanding of linguistic patterns of West and Central African languages.

Kashif offers three types of toponyms by which she classified the place names:

- place names derived from African words (African homophone), such as the Wando River in the Gullah/Geechee region of South Carolina, which is also the name of a river and a city (Kwando) in Angola

- place names from a mixture of words from several African language groups or an African and non-African word (African hybrid) such as Black Pocosin Mingo [15]

- African semantic content transfers (African calques) such as Nicodemus, Kansas, named for an enslaved African prince who purchased his freedom. Semantic transfers are not limited to inspirational figures, but can be an ethnic or linguistic reference, a duplication of another toponym, or a commentary on the human state-of-affairs.

According to Kashif, African American speech patterns are different from those of their European counterparts, due to the linguistic influences of the African languages that became creolized with English. These reflections show up in all aspects of American English inflected by African-derived speech. They include the names of places and the significance of what the names meant to those giving them. Using this sort of analysis, examination of place names in areas with influential African descendant communities should uncover additional Africanisms.

Conclusion

The examples given above are intended to offer preservationists examples of the influence of African cultural heritage on the American landscape. It is hoped that these examples will encourage preservationists to re-examine cultural resources in their communities or under their purview to determine what may hold the imprint of Africa. From large public places to an individual house, the possibilities for identifying Africanisms are great. For every African Burial Ground, there is a cemetery with African-inspired grave decorations. For every shotgun district in Georgia, there is another row of such residences in a long abandoned industrial section in another location. Africanisms reside in all of those places where people of African descent were involved in the development of a community, from its physical structures to its cultural lifeways.

1. While visiting New Orleans in 1819, Benjamin Henry Latrobe described and drew the instruments used and dances taking place in Congo Square. John Vlach makes the connection with the instruments to Africa in his book, *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 24-26. Cf. National Register of Historic Places, *Congo Square, New Orleans Parish, Louisiana. National Register #92001763*.

2. Following the lead of Roger Bastide, Midlo Hall believes that the influence of the enslaved Africans from Congo was overstated to the detriment of those from Senegambia. Hence, the name "Congo Square" may not be most representative of the dominant African ethnic group in New Orleans at the time. The formal name of the area recognized as Congo Square is Beauregard Square for Confederate General P.T.G. Beauregard, but it has been known as Circus Public Square and Place des Negres as well. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rogue: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 291-293, see f.n. 26.

3. See John Kleber, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Louisville* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 818-819.

4. Slave forts along the coast of modern Ghana, controlled by different European powers throughout their histories, were points of exportation for the Atlantic slave trade. The Danish established coastal trading posts by 1670. Frequently, captives were taken from the surrounding countryside, held in the forts until the ship was filled, either in the present port or by moving to another port along the West African coast. See Kwame A. Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 830; Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 208-212.

5. First documented reference to the Burial Ground comes in a letter from Chaplain John Sharpe in 1712. In 1785, land development proposals for the common land indicates the Burial Ground was no longer in use. See National Historic Landmarks, *African Burial Ground Complex, New York, New York. National Historic Landmarks #93001597*.

6. The African Burial Ground Memorial effort has a tumultuous history. Only a portion of the Burial Ground is available for visitation, the rest being covered by the federal office building. Community pressure preserved the site from total destruction, and led to the Memorial, a statue "Triumph of the Spirit" and an Interpretive Center. The hundreds of remains, presently with the W. Montague Cobb Bio-Anthropology Laboratory at Howard University in Washington, DC, are to be returned to their final resting-place.

7. Secret societies operate as organizing polities for some West and Central African ethnic groups. See Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), 315, 316, see f.n. 30, 317. Furthermore, ethnicities serve to bind members of clans to one another. A socially inferior family would be obligated to follow the lead of a superior one, determined by relationship of a family to the founder of local group. Cf. Charles Balandier, *Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), 180-209, 213-226.

8. Historically, Guinea has been conceived of in two sections. Upper Guinea, according to Thornton, extended from the Senegal River to Cape Mount in Liberia; Lower Guinea was located between the Ivory Coast and modern Cameroon. The modern country of Guinea borders Guinea Bissau and Gambia on the north, the Ivory Coast and Liberia to the south, and Mali and Ghana to the east. See John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, second edition (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 187-192.

9. Clay Lancaster, *The Architecture of Historic Nantucket* (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 242.

10. William D. Piersen, *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth Century New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 22.

11. The cultivation of sugar cane has Afro-Caribbean and African antecedents. Muslims introduced sugar to North Africa during the eighth century. North and West Africans provided the necessary labor for the sugar boom throughout the Mediterranean, including Spain and Portugal. Most sugar cultivation took place in East Africa, but substantial industries flourished in Morocco, and later in the Atlantic islands of the Azores, the Canaries, Madeira, and Cape Verde, off the west coast of Africa. Christopher Columbus brought cane cuttings with him to Hispanola on his second voyage to the Americas in 1493. Familiarity with sugar cultivation and need for a larger work force found Portugal importing Africans to the Americas to work on plantations. African agricultural skill made possible the production of sugar cane in the Caribbean and United States. Africans from the Upper Guinea region had agricultural experience with difficult crops, such as indigo and rice, prior to sugar cane. See Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870*,(New York: Simon and Shuster, 1997), 135-137. *Africana* offers a summary of sugar and its relationship to Africa. See Appiah and Gates, ed., *Africana,* 1800-1803.

12. The inter-African cultural melding is consistent with trends in places of secondary and tertiary stages of migration. Brown discusses the use of BaKongo *nkisi*, a protection amulet or Conjurer's kit, and a possible *amula*, or symbol of reverence to Ogun, a Yorubá deity, in the cosmogram beneath the Jordan Conjurer/Midwife's cabin. Deposits found beneath the Praise House may represent a creolized cosmogram with a Christian aesthetic, having a crucifix as the center and deposits radiating to the cardinal directions. Also, the similarity and compatibility of cosmograms to the Christian cross cannot be overlooked. Congo and Angola were exposed to Christianity prior to the Atlantic Slave Trade. The Praise House was the place for communal worship on the plantation for the African descendant people, found frequently in the coastal Carolinas and Georgia. There is also a cemetery that may contain further evidence of these African reflections. See Kenneth L. Brown, "Interwoven Traditions: Archaeology of the Conjurer's Cabins and the African American Cemetery at the Jordan and Frogmore Manor Plantations," in *Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape. Conference Proceedings, May 9-12, 2001, Atlanta, GA* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2001).

13. See note 7 in Chapter 3 for the significance of glasses and jars in funerary practices.

14. Brown, "Interwoven Traditions," 109. For more information on African religious beliefs in the New World, see Holloway, ed., *Africanisms in American Culture*.

15. Kashif found only one hybrid, Black Mingo Pocosin, a swamp bordering Virginia and North Carolina. Annette I. Kashif, "Africanisms Upon the Land: A Study of African Influenced Place Names of the USA," in *Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape. Conference Proceedings, May 9-12, 2001, Atlanta, GA* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2001), 27.

Chapter 3

Interpreting African Cultural Heritage at Historic Sites

African-American cultural heritage is increasingly included in the interpretation of historic sites open to the public. This chapter describes examples of interpretive programs that address Africanisms. Some African-related messages are more direct than others; some follow more conventional models; others require new means of analysis. Ultimately, using Africanisms in the interpretation and management of historic sites and places will enhance the understanding of America itself.

Historic sites that are located in areas where African Americans settled earliest may have stronger cases for Africanisms. The refreshing of African culture by new arrivals over the course of centuries builds a strong foundation for the study and interpretation of Africanisms. The primary stage, the place of original dispersion, for most people of African descent in North America is the Eastern seaboard and the South—New England, the Chesapeake, the Carolinas, Florida, and Louisiana.

Some Africanisms may require additional research and analysis beyond seeking a direct connection with Africa. The context may be recognized as African American, but the African cultural connection needs to be documented and clarified, such as with shotgun house districts, independent black towns, and the names of geographic landmarks. Others, such as rice cultivation and processing have distinctly African roots that have been obscured. Interpreting a site's Africanity means explaining the migration process by which the people find themselves in locations, as well as what culture they brought with them. The migration patterns, therefore, may influence the nature of Africanisms found at historic sites.

Some sites that are not listed here have African roots and origins, but their cultural context in the United States does

not come through New World African descended communities. The Washington Monument in Washington, DC is such an example. Noted American classical architect, Robert Mills, designed the nation's monument to George Washington. The Washington Monument is an obelisk, a four-sided spire with a triangular top. This monumental architectural style first appeared in Karnak, Egypt, around B.C. 1500, and was used to honor dignitaries. The function of the Washington Monument is consistent with that of its ancient predecessors.[1]

Gullah/Geechee Culture

Gullah/Geechee culture stretches from the Carolinas to northern Florida, leaving a distinctive mark on the historical traditions in the coastal region. Included are the Sea Islands off of South Carolina and the Golden Crescent of Georgia and Florida. The term "Gullah" is believed to be a homophone for "Gola" or Angola, and refers to those in the South Carolina Sea Islands. "Geechee" refers to those in the Georgia Sea Islands, and has a pejorative connotation of "country" or "hick." The Gullah/Geechee people possess linguistic traits, artisan skills, and agricultural and cultural practices attributable to African knowledge systems retained by those descendants. This survival is due to the relative geographic isolation of the areas and the concentrated and late influx of Africans from the same cultural zone. Gullah/Geechee culture is a repository of Africanisms and should be evaluated in light of African culture.

National Park Service interpretation programs have included Gullah culture and people. The National Park Service funded ethnographic/ethnohistorical oral histories at Kingsley plantation on Ft. George Island, Florida, and conducted ethnohistorical research at Cumberland and Amelia Islands in Georgia. It also has conducted an ethnohistorical study of African Americans at Snee Farm, Charles Pinckney National Historic Site, South Carolina. Research centers, such as the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture at the College of Charleston and the Penn Center on St. Helena Island, which hold valuable information on Gullah culture, also contribute to this effort.

Most recently, the National Park Service initiated the Low Country Gullah Culture Special Resource Study, a study mandated by Congress. The purpose of the study is to evaluate

Gullah/Geechee culture with an eye toward preserving and interpreting it in areas within the Park Service's purview. To that end, the National Park Service is conducting meetings with Gullah communities, providing an overview of scholarly literature on the culture, producing a GIS report on places of importance in the Gullah/Geechee region, and compiling a demographic overview of the region. A full report detailing these activities is scheduled to be completed by the fall of 2002.

Teaching With Historic Places: "When Rice Was King"

National Register of Historic Places
[www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp]

The National Register of Historic Places has developed nearly 100 classroom-ready teaching lesson plans in its *Teaching with Historic Places* program. These lesson plans use National Register-listed properties to instruct readers about specific themes, events, and significant people in American history. The lesson plans are available on-line, offering another way to experience a historic place or a national park.

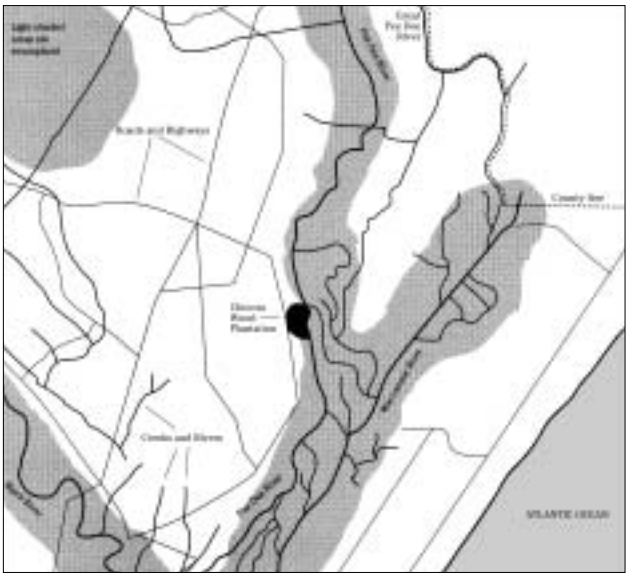


Illustration 17:
The map shows Chicora Wood Plantation in relation to the surrounding rice producing areas.

Map courtesy of *Teaching with Historic Places*, National Register of Historic Places

The *Teaching with Historic Places* staff revamped the lesson plan "When Rice Was King" to reflect the African contributions in the development of the rice industry in South Carolina. The lesson plan discusses the South's growing dependence on enslaved labor, specifically as it involved rice, South Carolina's premiere crop through much of the eighteenth century. *(Illustration 17)* Chicora Wood was one of the most successful rice plantations in Georgetown County. By 1860, Chicora Wood served as the home base for a network of seven rice plantations throughout the county for processing rice for market. Using scholarship derived from the National Park Service's "Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape" conference, Teaching with Historic Places acknowledges the long-standing African expertise in rice cultivation in South Carolina.

Illustration 19:
The kitchen at Chicora Wood Plantation is separate from the house, mitigating the heat during the warmer months.

Photo courtesy of Charles Bayless

Scholarship in the last 40 years points to rice cultivation and processing in South Carolina as having West African roots. The Portuguese cultivated rice and used enslaved labor in Brazil in the sixteenth century. Rice was introduced to the British North American colonies in the early part of the 1600s. However, it only became a successful cash crop for South Carolina once planters increased importation of Africans from the rice growing areas of West Africa.[2]

Illustration 18:
The processing of rice evolved from a manual process to a mechanized one, using winnowing houses and rice mills shown here in Georgetown County, SC.

Photo courtesy of Charles Bayless

At Chicora Wood, and other plantations in the coastal Carolinas, a technique of manipulating tidal flows using embankments and sluice gates to attain high levels of productivity in the flood plains of rivers and streams was practiced. Large wooden mortars and pestles were originally used to husk the rice, and winnowing baskets separated the husked kernels from their covering. Eventually, the process became mechanized, but the basic method of pounding, flailing, and winnowing remained the same. *(Illustration 18)* "When Rice Was King" uses Judith Carney's essay from the "Places of Cultural Memory" conference to make the connection between West African rice production, the enslaved Africans used to plant rice, and the development of these techniques in South Carolina. These developments made South Carolina one of the leading rice exporters in the world.

The diet of American southerners reflects the influence of Africans who served as cooks on plantations. Rice went from a subsistence crop for the enslaved to a regular part of the

American diet. The detached kitchens on larger plantations such as Chicora Wood may also reveal an Africanism. The kitchen was kept separate from the big house on plantations, in part, to mitigate excessive heat in the main house during the warmer months. West and Central African groups, such as the Asante in Ghana, cook outside of the domicile in a courtyard space designated for communal use.[3] *(Illustration 19)* In addition, separate kitchens lessened the chance of destruction of the home due to fire.

The planting techniques, the processing of rice, the introduction of rice to the American palate, the outbuildings, and the separation of kitchens from the house at Chicora Wood are due to African influence and underscore the knowledge transfer that took place.

Shotgun Houses at
Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site
Atlanta, Georgia

Preservation of shotgun house districts has become a popular and profitable activity. One of the better known examples is the grouping of double shotgun houses near the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta, Georgia. According to the "Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic Site, Cultural Landscape Report: Birth-Home Block" released in 1995 by the National Park Service, these houses were built starting in 1905. Located in the Sweet Auburn District, the shotgun houses are part of the century-old African American enclave. Originally developed in the 1870s for middle-class white homeowners, the old Fourth Ward, in which Auburn Avenue was located, had become an integrated neighborhood by the turn of the twentieth century. 1910 saw Auburn Avenue homes filled with middle-class African Americans, including the family of the Reverend A. D. Williams, maternal grandfather of Martin Luther King, Jr. The five double shotgun houses on the Birth-Home block grew to eighteen by the 1930s.[4] The shotgun houses continue to be inhabited by African Americans.

Illustration 20:
Shotgun houses are prevalent in the Sweet Auburn neighborhood. This illustration shows a double shotgun house in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic District.
Photo courtesy of Cheryl Shropshire

In the 1980s, the Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC) rehabilitated this shotgun row and other houses (in addition to adding new construction) in the adjoining Sweet Auburn district. HDDC views the shotgun houses as

vital parts of the community and seeks to preserve its history as a place of settlement and a holder of cultural traditions for African Americans by encouraging elderly community members and families to remain in the houses. HDDC conducts heritage tours of the neighborhood that reference shotgun houses as an Africanism. The double shotgun house, the predominant type in Sweet Auburn, is particular to, but not exclusive to Georgia. *(Illustration 20, page 43)*

Illustration 21:
This grave marker commemorates the four inhabitants of Parting Ways. Recent scholarship indicates that the actual burial sites may be nearer to the homes.

Photo courtesy of Tex Avery

Parting Ways Archeological District

Plymouth, Massachusetts

People of African descent established independent towns, which bear imprints of African heritage. Parting Ways, Massachusetts was a settlement of former enslaved Africans who won their freedom by fighting in the Revolutionary War. The site is marked by a sign at the side of the road, honoring and listing the names of the original inhabitants, one of which, Quamany, is an Akan day-name for a boy born on Saturday.(5) Found among the ruins of the side was pottery similar to the colono-ware vessels found in South Carolina, Virginia, and the Caribbean. The large jars were used to carry and store tamarind, a West African fruit grown in the Caribbean.(6) The footprints of the house ruins correspond with those found in Caribbean villages where African people built their own housing. *(Illustration 21a)*

Illustration 21a:
This photograph shows an excavation of the Plato Turner home at Parting Ways.

Photo courtesy of Tex Avery

A small cemetery across the road from the home site holds slate gravestones. However, the actual gravesites of the inhabitants are believed to be closer to the housing ruins. *(Illustration 21)* Mounds near the location of the houses were marked with broken bottles and jars, reminiscent of Akan ritual compounds.(7) The name itself, Parting Ways, is representative of an African semantic transfer, a practice of naming places for emotions, experiences, actions, and attitudes.

Artifacts from the site are on display at the 1749 Court House and Museum. Further interpretation is provided by Parting Ways: the Museum of African American and Cape Verdean History, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the legacy of those interred at the site. Its web site, www.partingways.org, contains additional interpretation. Parting Ways is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Administered by the town of Plymouth, the settlement demonstrates the retention of African cultural practices evident in archeological sites and cemeteries.

Zion Poplars Baptist Church

Gloucester, Virginia

The woods could be a place of worship, of either West African deities or Christianity, without the restraints of European worship.(8) As African Americans adopted Christianity, the faith took on aspects of its practitioners' past beliefs. An expression of faith for some African American Christianity was more extroverted, involving participation from the congregation and a call-and-response style of preaching. Dancing and music were active parts of the service. This form of worship diverged sharply from that of their European counterparts. Brush arbors, or bush harbors as they were sometimes known, were where enslaved Africans could practice their form of Christianity clandestinely.

With this in mind, the congregation of Zion Poplars Baptist Church built their church after the Civil War beneath seven poplar trees which were united to form a single base. This location resonated with the congregation for Christian and West and Central African reasons. The site was viewed as a

Illustration 22:
The poplars serve as a place of shelter and of worship for the congregation of Zion Poplars Baptist.

Photo courtesy of Natalie Robertson

natural miracle—the ideal place to commune with God—and a familiar location. On what had been a location to secretly practice religion was built a public place to continue their religious observance. *(Illustrations 22 and 22a)*

Illustration 22a:
Zion Poplars Baptist and its surroundings represent a continuation of West African religious practices.

Photo courtesy of Natalie Robertson

The congregation built the church, situated it and the community graveyard beneath the poplars, and named the church for those same trees. This choice of location denotes an Africanism and is valuable for interpreting Zion Poplars to tourists and the community at large, as is documented in the National Register of Historic Places nomination for Zion Poplars Baptist Church.

Poplar Forest Archeological Research

Near Lynchburg, Virginia

Located near Lynchburg, Poplar Forest was Thomas Jefferson's other plantation, besides Monticello. He inherited both properties through his father-in-law, and was one of the largest holders of enslaved Africans in central Virginia. Jefferson allowed the Africans at Poplar Forest the freedom to travel, frequently to and from Monticello, and to produce and sell the fruits of their labor on their own time. Through this commercial activity, Jefferson's enslaved Africans were able to supplement their diets and incomes.[9]

An examination of the North Hill and Quarter portions of the plantation revealed subfloor pits, used as storage areas within housing structures. This practice, according to Poplar Forest archeologist, Barbara Heath, may have roots in West Africa

with the Ibo of Nigeria.[10] In addition, there is on-going archeological investigation on personal items found that may have West African antecedents.

The vegetal remains recovered from the subfloor pits contained edible and non-edible plant material, as well as bones from non-domesticated animals, which fell outside of what was known to be provided to the Quarter's inhabitants. In some cases, the plants differed from those used for European dietary and medicinal purposes. The findings suggest African knowledge systems at work. Heath cites Merrick Posnansky's research on transfer of African knowledge to the Caribbean, stating that plants from the same family were used similarly by Africans on both sides of the Atlantic. Posnansky points to the collaboration of African and Native American knowledge of plants and pharmacopoeia in adapting African practices to New World plant types.[11] Heath infers that the same transfer took place in Virginia.

Conclusion

The study of African influences in America is being incorporated into the stories of historic sites. The narratives and histories reflect the views of the communities they serve and the institutions that manage them. The addition of Africanisms to the interpretation will alter how the visitors view the site, and possibly attract new visitors altogether. Increased visitation and new audiences benefit these places in many ways, not the least of which is financially, as heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourist economy.

The range of vernacular cultural contexts that is shaped by Africanisms speaks to the pervasiveness of African descendants and their collective culture in the United States. As Africanisms are researched and added to the interpretation at more historic sites, all historic site administrators are encouraged to evaluate their cultural resources for African influences.

1. In the original Washington Monument design, Mills included Neo-classical elements that were not consistent with traditional Egyptian obelisk design. The top of the Monument was nearly flat and there was a pantheon encircling the base. Two other monuments to George Washington were erected, in Baltimore and Richmond, both with Neo-Classical designs and both attributable to Mills (there is debate as to his having designed the one in Richmond). In 1879, after a lengthy delay due to the theft of stone donated by the Vatican and a lack of funding, the National Monument Society decided to leave the 300 ft. uncompleted and top it with a statue. George Perkins Marsh, U.S. ambassador to Italy and a student of Egyptian architecture, advised the Society against the statue. The ambassador argued for standard Egyptian proportions of 10:1 height to base and advised against the circular temple base. He recommended that a pyramid adorn the top, as called for by traditional design. At the time of its completion in 1884, the Monument rose 555 feet high and was the tallest structure in the world. The use of the obelisk form links America, a relatively new nation at the time, to an ancient prosperous civilization.

   For more on Mills and the Washington Monuments, see Carroll Orchards, "Notes & Comments: Robert Mills, Architect and Engineer," in *Architectural Record 40* (6) (December 1916): 583-588; H. E. Pierce Gallagher, "Robert Mills, 1781-1855: America's First Native Architect," in *Architectural Record* (May 1929): 478-484. For more on Egypt, obelisks, and the connection to the Washington Monument, see Nnamdi Ellah, *African Architecture: Evolution and Transformation* (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1997) and Susan Denyer *African Traditional Architecture* (New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1978). Cf. David Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation* (Seattle and London, UK: University of Washington Press, 2000), 356.

   The obelisk as an African architectural form predates European, Greek, or Persian contact with Egypt. Its introduction to the United States comes though a Western European cultural context. Obelisks have been removed from Egypt to the West since Augustinian times. Thirteen of the remaining twenty-one obelisks in the world are located in Rome. Only five exist in Egypt, and the rest are scattered throughout the world, in London, Paris, Istanbul, and most recently, New York. In the 1800s, obelisks were considered part of the Neo-Classical vocabulary. It would be safe to presume Mills, a white South Carolinian, interpreted the form through Western European culture, and not African. Furthermore, the North African origins of the architectural form do not coincide with the West African origins of the Africans brought to the New World, putting it outside of the definition of Africanisms given by Holloway. However, there is no doubt as to the African origins of obelisks and the continuity of use as memorial monumental architecture.

   Future research into Africanisms may include the Washington Monument, and places like Opa-Locka, Florida, known for its Moorish architecture. Built originally for European Americans, the African American community has assumed stewardship of the buildings, and view themselves as best able to maintain its integrity, due to the cultural connection with Africa.

2. Daniel C. Littlefield states in *Rice and Slaves* that 40% of enslaved Africans entering South Carolina during the time rice was a premiere export crop were from regions of West Africa that were rice-producing for 1,000 years prior to European contact. Growing rice means having a knowledgeable labor force. As Littlefield states, "being familiar with a crop is a different matter from being familiar with the cultivation of a crop." Southern Europe had limited rice production at the time, primarily in Italy, not a country actively involved in the Atlantic slave trade. The strain of rice present in the Carolinas was consistent with an Asian variety introduced to the New World by the Portuguese, but the cultivation techniques used are different from those used in Asia. The Carolinas never used the transplanting method popular throughout Asia.

The increased numbers of Africans from what was known as the Windward Coast corresponds with a shift from rain-fed cultivation to tidal-fed cultivation, which proved successful for Carolina planters. There were geographical and climactic similarities—sub tropical conditions and flood-plains like those in Mali along the Niger River, Senegal and Gambia near the Senegal River, and in Ghana. Judith Carney argues technologies were transferred from the region to the Carolinas, such as mortars and pestles for hulling and polishing, and flails and winnowing baskets for separating the hulls from the grains. For more detailed analyses of African rice production in the United States and the New World, see Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975); Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Urbana and Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois, 1991); Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2001). Cf. Carney, "Rice, Slaves and Landscapes of Cultural Memory" in *Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape. Conference Proceedings, May 9-12, 2001, Atlanta, GA* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2001), 43-61.

3. See John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 43; Abimbola O. Asojo, "Traditional African Architecture and Its Impact on Place Making: Case Studies from African and African-American Communities," in *Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape. Conference Proceedings, May 9-12, 2001, Atlanta, GA* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2001); Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), xxii-xxiii.

4. The five shotguns are the first of nine built by the Empire State Investment Company. See Lucy A. Lawliss, ed., *Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site Cultural Landscape Report: Birth-Home Block*, (Atlanta, GA: National Park Service, 1995), 16, fn. 21. For more detailed historical information about the shotguns, the Birth-Home site and the surrounding neighborhood, see *Cultural Landscape Report*, 11-47; National Register of Historic Places, *Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic District (Boundary Increase), Fulton County, Georgia. National Register #0000741.*

5. The inscription on the maker reads "Here lie the graves of four Negro slaves: Quamany, Prince, Plato, Cato. These men fought in the Revolutionary War and were freed at its close. The cemetery is located in the original 94 acre plot of land which was deeded to them by the U.S. government when they were given their freedom." The town was once named New Guinea. See James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1996), 205-206.

6. Deetz offers that the shape of the jars is consistent with types associated with West African pottery traditions. Deetz cites no specific area or group, however Ferguson's research points at a Nigerian tradition in colono-ware. Preliminary research into unofficial documents held by Parting Ways: the Museum of African-American and Cape Verdean History, may indicate the inhabitants were from modern Guinea-Bisssau via Cape Verde, offering a Caribbean connection to the U.S. See Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*, 148; Furgeson, *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800*, 1-32.

7. Multivalency—how objects take on different meanings for different social groups—must be considered in the interpretation of Parting Ways. Bottles and jars found at graves throughout the Caribbean and southern America have been reevaluated with western African funerary practices in mind, as opposed to being interpreted as refuse or litter. The spirits of the dead

reside in water, according to Kongo beliefs, and the vessels—jars and bottles—typically represented water. They would have holes in the bottom to indicate their association with the burial mound. Coins and, on occasion, food offerings have been found at gravesites. In a discussion with Deetz, Vlach states the burial deposits are reminiscent of those found in modern Ghana. See Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*, 207-209; see also Thompson's essay "Kongo Influences on African American Artistic Culture," in Holloway, ed., *Africanisms in American Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990) 148-184.

8. It is believed by some West African cultures that spirits reside in the bush. Some wooded areas are kept just for these spirits or deities, to ensure their favor, as in the case of Ogun, the Yorubá deity responsible for ironmongery. Similarly, Poro-Sande organizations (male and female secret societies) held sacred groves. The groves were used for puberty rites of passage for young initiates. The groups, found throughout Upper Guinea (Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, and modern Liberia) served as social, political, and organizing polities. Sandra F. Barnes, "Introduction: The Many Faces of Ogun," in *Africa's Ogun, Old World and New* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990); Margaret Washington Creel, "Gullah Attitudes Toward Life and Death," in Holloway, ed., *Africanisms in American Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990) 76-78.

9. See Barbara J. Heath, *Hidden Lives: The Archaeology of Slave Life at Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 50-52. Idem, "Bounded Yards and Fluid Boundaries: Landscapes of Slavery at Poplar Forrest," in *Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape. Conference Proceedings*, May 9-12, 2001, Atlanta, GA (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2001), 69-81.

10. Anne Yentsch discusses the use of storage cellars for food, and to hide and protect possessions. Heath cites this discussion in *Hidden Lives*. See Anne Yentsch, "A Note on a 19th Century Description of Below Ground 'Storage Cellars' Among the Ibo," in *African-American Archaeology* 4 (1991):3.

11. See Posnansky's comments in Merrick Posnansky, "West Africanist Reflections on African American Archaeology," in Theresa Singleton, ed., *I, Too, Am America: Archaeological Studies of African-American Life* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 32.


1800 - 1880's

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Africanisms in National Park Service Cultural Resources Programs

This list represents a compilation of the properties documented and/or recognized by the National Park Service's cultural resources programs (National Register of Historic Places, National Historic Landmarks, Historic American Building Survey/Historic American Engineering Record) as possessing Africanisms. It is not exhaustive, but the list points out that there are dozens of properties already documented and recognized as associated with African cultural heritage. Additional investigation will likely yield more entries.

The National Register of Historic Places

The following National Register properties are associated with Africanisms. This list is based on the publication, *African American Historic Places*, Beth Savage, ed. (Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, 1994) and the files of the National Register of Historic Places.

Each entry is listed by state, followed by a brief statement of how it is associated with Africanisms.

Arkansas

Hampton Springs Cemetery (Carthage, Dallas County) contains black sections that illustrate African antecedents.

Delaware

Smyrna Historic District (Smyrna, Kent County) documents the African presence since the mid-nineteenth century in a small black settlement.

Florida

MacFarlane Homestead Historic District (Coral Gables, Dade County) is a traditionally African American residential neighborhood within Coral Gables that is populated with shotgun houses, ca. 1933 and after, among other vernacular forms.

Georgia

Ashby Street Shotgun Row Historic District (Americus, Sumter County) is located in an African American neighborhood called McCoy Hill, which contains three shotgun houses that date from ca. 1908-1912.

Behavior Cemetery (McIntosh County) is an African American burial ground on Sapelo Island associated with the settlement of Raccoon Bluff and Hog Hammock, the sole African American community still resident on Sapelo Island. The cemetery is over 100 years old and is likely to yield information on African American burial practices.

Bethlehem Historic District (Augusta, Richmond County) is an African American neighborhood of Augusta with ca. 1870s shotgun and double shotgun houses and swept yards.

Brightwell Shotgun Row (Athens, Clarke County) contains six shotgun houses in an unusual back-to-back formation in the Newtown section of Athens, a traditionally African American neighborhood.

Covington Historic District (Newton County) includes shotgun houses and swept yards in the African American neighborhood of Covington.

Dawson Historic District (Terrell County) is an African American neighborhood with shotgun houses and swept yards.

Hog Hammock Historic District (McIntosh County) is listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its association with traditional cultural properties and Gullah language and traditions. It is considered to be one of the last viable coastal black communities in Georgia.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic District (Atlanta, Fulton County) in Sweet Auburn is an African American neighborhood with shotgun houses, in addition to the King birth home.

New Corinth Baptist Church (Americus, Sumter County) is a 1884 African American church and cemetery. Burials are in cement crypts without an overall organization pattern and could yield information on African burial practices.

Rocksprings Shotgun Row Historic District (part of Shotgun Houses of Athens-Clarke County MPS, Athens, Clarke County) contains six shotgun houses in a row on Rocksprings Street, ca. 1925.

Sand Hills Historic District (Augusta, Richmond County) developed as an African American residential neighborhood with, among other forms, shotgun houses and swept yards.

Indiana

Old Richmond Historic District (Richmond, Wayne County) was once called "Little Africa." It was heart the of Richmond's free black community.

Kentucky

Harrison Historic District (Franklin, Simpson County) is an African American neighborhood that contains shotgun houses, among other vernacular forms.

Smoketown Historic District (Louisville, Jefferson County) is an African American neighborhood in Louisville that possesses shotgun houses, among other vernacular residential forms.

Louisiana

Congo Square (New Orleans, Orleans Parish) is a reflection of African heritage. This was where Sunday slave dances were held and African dances and music were performed.

Melrose Plantation (Melrose, Natchitoches Parish) was owned by a formerly enslaved woman, Marie Therese Coincoin. It contains architecture designed by transplanted Africans for their use.

Massachusetts

Parting Ways Archeological District (Plymouth, Plymouth County) was a settlement of emancipated Africans during the late eighteenth century and includes remains of housing types and gravesites that have West African roots.

Prince Hall Mystic Cemetery (Arlington, Middlesex County) is the last extant cemetery associated with Prince Hall Masons. Prince Hall Masons was formed in 1775 in Boston as the first African American Masonic group in the United States. The cemetery was dedicated in 1868 and may yield archeological information on African burial practices and how African Americans influenced Masonic burial practices.

Mississippi

Holy Family Catholic Church Historic District (Natchez, Adams County) is an African American neighborhood with shotgun houses, among other vernacular and high style forms.

Woodlawn Historic District (Natchez, Adams County) is an African American neighborhood with shotgun houses.

New Jersey

Gethsemane Cemetery (Little Ferry, Bergen County) was founded in 1860 for Hackensack's African American community. Archeological studies may yield information on African and African American burial practices.

New York

[The] African-American Cemetery (Montgomery, Orange County) is a slave and African American cemetery.

Mount Moor African-American Cemetery (Clarkstown, Rockland County) is an African American cemetery that dates to the mid-nineteenth century.

Tobias C. Ten Eyck House and Cemeteries (Coeymans, Albany County) is a plantation with ca. 1790 slave cemetery, subsequently used by the local African American population.

North Carolina

Ayden Historic District (Ayden, Pitt County) includes shotgun houses in community's black neighborhoods.

Puerto Rico

Manati Municipality Hacienda Azucarera La Esperanza (Manati, Manati Municipality) was Puerto Rico's wealthiest sugar plantation. Today, it is an archeological site that illustrates the life and culture of aboriginal people and its colonization and settlement by people of European and African decent.

South Carolina

Chicora Wood Plantation (Georgetown vicinity, Georgetown County) was a rice-producing plantation during South Carolina's rice boom. It served as the home plantation for R.F.W. Allston's rice producing complex, producing 1.5 million pounds yearly of rice by 1860. The plantation contains outbuildings fashioned according to African cultural practices and earthworks for a system of rice planting of West African origin.

Daufuskie Island Historic District (Hilton Head, Beaufort County) is one of southernmost Sea Islands, accessible only by boat. It is significant for its first settlement 1805-1842 and extant tabby slave huts. The second settlement occurred during Reconstruction. It is significant for its home to "shouts" with African traditional antecedents and Maryfield Cemetery with African traditional burial practices.

Eddings Point Community Praise House (Frogmore, Beaufort County) is the central place in religious and social lives of black Sea Islanders. It includes buildings characteristic of the "vernacular praise house architectural form" and home to shouts.

Mary Jenkins Community Praise House (Frogmore, Beaufort County) is a place where shouts were held.

Trapp and Chandler Pottery Site (Kirksey, Greenwood County) is an antebellum pottery factory employing free and enslaved African Americans who influenced manufacturing processes.

Tennessee

Bailey Graveyard (Commerce vicinity, Wilson County) is a mid-nineteenth and twentieth century cemetery with African American burials that could yield information on African burial practices.

Texas

Freedmen's Town Historic District (Houston, Harris County) includes a number of shotgun houses and is known as the "Mother Ward for Black Houston."

Queen City Heights Historic District (Dallas, Dallas County) includes a ca. 1915-45 residential neighborhood with shotgun houses.

Wyatt Street Shotgun House Historic District (Waxahachie, Ellis County) is a row of small, single-family dwellings dating from ca. 1918 in Waxahachie's historically black neighborhood. The house plans are attributed to African roots.

Virgin Islands

Christiansted Historic District (Christiansted, St. Croix) is the site of the earliest colonization of U.S. Virgin Islands where enslaved Africans and free blacks played a major role in the design and construction of buildings and structures in the area. It includes the "Free Gut" residential community for free African Americans.

Virginia

Holbrook-Ross Street Historic District (Danville Independent City) is a residential area that includes shotgun houses.

Zion Poplars Baptist Church (Gloucester, Gloucester County) is an African American church and cemetery built by former enslaved Africans in 1894. The location of the church may have been chosen based upon beliefs derived from West African religious practices.

National Historic Landmarks

The following National Historic Landmark properties are associated with Africanisms.

Each entry is listed by state and includes a brief statement of what makes it an Africanism.

New York

[The] African Burial Ground (New York, New York County) is an urban burial ground used ca. 1712-1785 and contains remains of some of the earliest generations of Africans in America. It has potential to yield important information about African Americans in the eighteenth century.

South Carolina

[The] Stono River Slave Rebellion Site (Rantowles, Charleston County) is the location of one of the most serious slave insurrections in U.S. history. Reports indicate the rebels were led by enslaved Angolans and adhered to Central African martial practices, due possibly to Central African kinship bonds.

The Historic American Buildings Survey

The following Historic American Buildings Survey properties are associated with Africanisms.

Each entry is listed by state and includes a brief statement of what makes it an Africanism.

District of Columbia

Mt. Zion United Methodist Church (Georgetown, District of Columbia) was formed in 1814. Known as the "Ark" or the "Meeting House," the church had free and enslaved members who would have been only one or two generations removed from Africa. References in the records of the church to enslaved Africans having "gone home" (euphemism for death) is consistent with Igbo ideology. The Igbo, from present-day Nigeria, were the predominant enslaved ethnic group in the Chesapeake area.

Kentucky

Kuntz Shotgun House (Louisville, Jefferson County) was built between 1889 and 1891 and is representative of a two-story "camelback" style shotgun, a more recent modification of the vernacular architectural style.

Louisiana

Melrose Plantation (Melrose, Natchitoches Parish) was owned by a formerly enslaved woman, Marie Therese Coincoin. It contains buildings designed by transplanted Africans for their use. (Property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places)

Massachusetts

African Baptist Society Church (Nantucket, Nantucket County) is the oldest remaining building in Nantucket associated with people from West Africa. The building is located in a neighborhood called Newtown, on land purchased by the African Baptist Society in 1826 for $10.50. The section of Newtown where the church resides formerly was known as "Guinea."

Virginia

Poplar Forest (Forest vicinity, Bedford County) is Thomas Jefferson's other major land holding in Virginia, aside from Monticello. It holds archeological information that documents the continuation of African dietary, agricultural, and mercantile practices among slave population. The majority of the slave population was no more than one or two generations removed from African soil. (Property is designated as a National Historic Landmark)

The Historic American Engineering Record

The following Historic American Engineering Record property is associated with Africanisms.

The entry is listed by state and includes a brief statement of what makes it an Africanism.

Louisiana

Laurel Valley Sugar Plantation, Shotgun Quarters (Thibodaux, LaFourche Parish) were built as a part of the larger plantation. There are 26 shotgun houses in total, which represent vernacular architecture with African origins. (Property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.)

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Illustrations and Tables

National Park Service
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