The Hidden Lives of Logtown

The Material Culture of the Enslaved at Gunston Hall



The Old Plantation
Watercolor on laid paper
John Rose
1785-1790

In 2013, archeological digs, revealed the possible remains of Logtown, where the enslaved community lived at Gunston Hall during the lifetime of George Mason IV. The archeology team found two subfloor level pits with a diverse array of archeological remains that testify to the presence, community, and the humanity of the enslaved at Gunston.

Small Subfloor pit
Gunston Hall, Lorton, VA
Gunston Hall Archeology Report
18th century



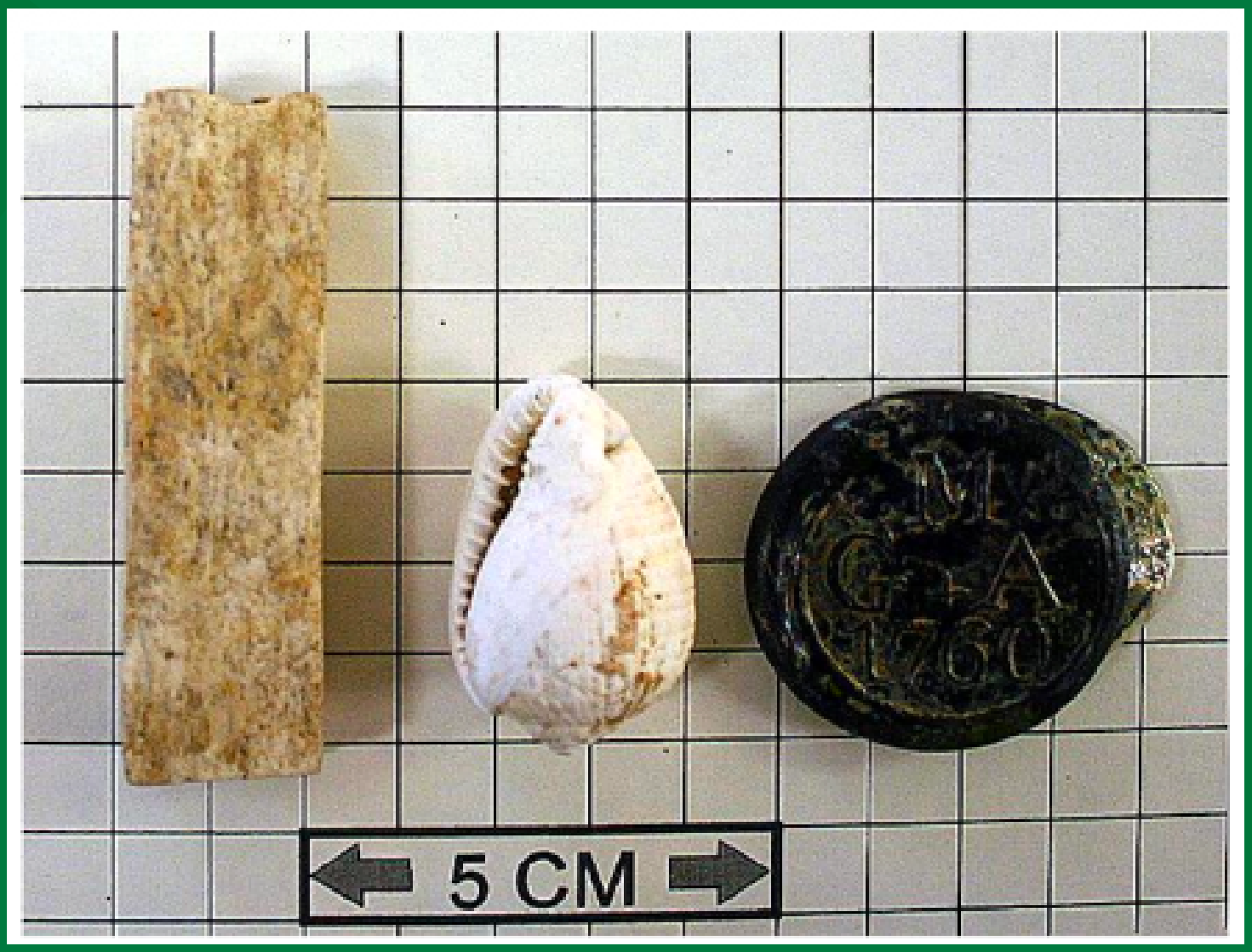
Found in the archeology dig at the homes of the enslaved at Gunston, the above subfloor pit was constructed with a cobblestone spiral. Within west African religious traditions, the spiral represented the universe, thus indicating that this pit could have possessed spiritual significance. An even larger pit, seen below, was found next to its smaller counterpart and was filled with precious material culture objects.



Large Subfloor Pit
Gunston Hall, Lorton, VA
Gunston Hall Archeology Report
1770 to mid-1780s

The Conjuror's Bag

Conjure bags were vessels of empowerment typically worn and filled with different ritual items, such as bones, shells, or pieces of wood which were all found in the Gunston pit. Functioning as a protective amulet believed to control events, or carry out curses, a conjure bag was a diverse spiritual tool seen throughout enslaved African communities.



From left to right: Petrified wood, Cowrie shell, and Mason bottle seal. Petrified wood was also used within conjurer's bags which were a part of African spirituality seen throughout the American South. Associated with the spirituality of the African diaspora, this cowrie shell was found in the large subfloor pit at Gunston despite it being native to the Caribbean and West Atlantic ecosystems. Also, wax seals with the "M. G + A 1760" standing for George and Ann Mason, were placed on wine bottles at Gunston.



Logtown Reimagined
Digital Photo Collage
Gunston Hall, Lorton, VA
Ally DelDonna
2026



Beyond Gunston
Digital Photo Collage
Gunston Hall, Lorton, VA
Ally DelDonna
2026