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Chapter 6: Excavated non-Plantation Contexts

This chapter will describe the sites across Saba that will be referenced throughout this work. The process of excavation will be described along with details of artifact compositions. Unless otherwise specified, all sites discussed below which range between SB 001 to SB 032 were originally surveyed by Jay Haviser (1985). Particular attention was paid to the ceramic assemblages regarding typologies and surface decoration, and to a lesser extent the glass assemblage, in the cases where this abounded relative to ceramics.

SB 037: The Fort Bay ridge site

Overview and Site Location

The site SB 037 is located at the foot of Bunker Hill in the southwest of the island at approximately 17°37'07N and 63°15'04W, half way up the road between the Fort Bay Harbour and The Bottom. Its proximity to Parish Hill and Great Hill, two young volcanic domes, may have impacted its pre-Columbian occupation history through volcanic events. The vegetation at SB 037 consists mainly of grasses, the invasive *Euphorbia tithymaloides*, and “Maraun bush” (*Croton flavens* L.). The SB 037 site was a strategic settlement location throughout the Amerindian and colonial periods. Fort Bay, Ladder Bay, and Wells Bay are the only reliable anchorage points on Saba, aided in part by the sheltered position of the western waters around Saba from the northeast trade winds. A small freshwater spring is present at Fort Bay, which has been used since the early colonial period of Saba, and almost certainly during the Amerindian period. The only easy access to The Bottom is through the Fort Bay Gut. Given the elevated position of SB 037 over the Fort Bay Gut, the site would not only have been highly defensible, but it allowed occupants to control access to The Bottom. This was known to the early colonists of Saba; before 1689 and into the early eighteenth century, the Fort Bay Gut was described as a “zigzag route, scratched into the rock, into a completely impregnable natural fortress, the narrow way still lined by planks filled with rocks” (Crane 1971:12; Labat 1724:341). This defense system was used to repulse an invasion by French buccaneers led by a certain Pinel in 1689 (Crane 1971:12; Labat 1724:344). Given the proximity to the shoreline at Fort Bay, the Fort Bay freshwater spring, and the defensiveness of its location, it is no small wonder that the site saw occupation throughout the pre-Columbian and colonial eras. While excavations at the site unearthed a substantial Amerindian component, for the purpose of this research, only the work relevant to the colonial era will be outlined.
SABARC undertook mitigation excavations at the site between late May to early July 2015, ahead of the construction of a new diesel electricity generator plant for the island.

Geology

The area of SB 037 consists mainly of un lithified andesite block and ash flow deposits (Roobol & Smith 2004:Plate 2). On average across the site, at 80cm depth, a 40cm thick deposit of loam and sandy loam is present, overlain with a 50cm to 60cm thick inorganic deposit sand with many poorly sorted andesite boulder inclusions. Below the loam lens is a deposit of coarse sand and gravel, with the same proportion of andesite inclusions. The 40m machine excavator trench revealed a deep deposit of fine sand beginning at a depth of approximately 120cm, and extending down past 200cm, with noticeably small presence of andesite.

Structure 1 (Cistern)

The cistern is located at the extreme southwest corner of SB 037, in an area that has been designated as a zone that will not be impacted by the construction of the generator. It has an architecture that has not been seen elsewhere on Saba. The cistern is domed by Ijssel brick construction, with an off centered square top hatch and an adjacent watering basin for livestock. Most striking is the use of large, flat slabs of basalt collected from the cliff side of Fort Hill on the opposite side of the modern road to serve as a rain water catchment surface for the cistern. This style of
construction is unique to this homestead on Saba. These were set over top of the expanse of the cistern, and extending north of it an average of 150cm, into a bowl shape, with the drain located in the center-south of the cistern. The area north of the cobbled catchment consists of rounded stones averaging 8cm in diameter that were set into the ground with a fine plaster laid overtop to extend the catchment area. This area ends just 2-3 meters south of Structure 2. Notably, the plaster used as catchment for this cistern differs significantly from that used at Spring Bay Flat (SB 007) and Spring Bay (004), both which would have been contemporary with SB 037 throughout its occupation. The plaster at the former two sites included locally sourced trass as a means of making the plaster more water resistant and giving a better bond. This also resulted giving this plaster an orange hue. Trass was not incorporated into the plastered catchment north of the cobblestones, which is also evidenced by the lack of any continuous plastered surface over the small, bedded rocks. The cobbled catchment area of the cistern measures 30.32 m², while the mortared catchment measures 30.50 m², for a total catchment area of about 60.82 m². The cistern basin measures 7.37m east to west, and approximately 3.00m north to south. The basin’s depth could not be determined as it was filled with sediment, nearly to the top.

![Figure 66: Cistern watering trough and hatch, facing northeast.](image)

**Structure 2**

Structure 2 is defined primarily by two parallel walls of face stones, flat sides aligned northwards, joined by unmodified, flat stones on their east and west flanks. Only three unmodified stones on the east flank extend northward to suggest the presence of a former house foundation. A section measuring 3.12m x 5.24m was delineated adjacent to the northern two of the face stone walls as the approximate limits of the structure. Within this area, and between the face stone walls, the top 10cm of fill was removed to reveal the remains of a structure such as a foundations or a tile floor. Within these bounds, 1,656g of mortar was removed, scattered evenly across the area. Several chunks
were bonded to orange floor tile fragments. A total of eight orange tile fragments were recovered, measuring 23mm thick, and one brick, 30mm thick. Few ceramics were recovered; these included two sherds of Creamware, one sherd of Chinese porcelain, and one sherd of Staffordshire combed slipware. Three sand temper brown hollowware Amerindian sherds were also recovered, one of which was burnished in the interior. Other artifacts included a sherd of green glass, one sherd of a lantern globe, three *Citarium pica* shell fragments, and eleven pieces of coral.

Approximately 11.5m southwest of Structure 2 lies an area of scattered rubble, comprised of large conglomerates of brick and mortar. The brick is a mix of Ijssel and orange brick identical to that found within the Structure 2 fill, but most of the bricks are broken. These are probably the remains of the hearth and chimney associated with the house. The lack of foundations, the preponderance of mortar, and the rubble concentration suggests that Structure 2 was either destroyed, scavenged for bricks, floor tiles and other salvageable materials, or both. This was a common practice on Saba, to the point where the only standing ruins with salvageable material left on Saba are those of the sugar boiling house at Spring Bay (SB 004), and to a lesser extent the remains of the same at Spring Bay Flat, which are both situated in locations which would otherwise make for arduous salvage efforts. In the 1850’s, the Catholic Church in Windwardside was constructed by salvaging bricks and face stones from the Big House and sugar boiling house at Spring Bay Flat (Will Johnson, personal communication 2013). Wood structure houses were rarely left abandoned; if the residents moved to another location on the island, they were often dismantled and transported piecemeal to the new location, which occurred most notably at Palmetto Point.

*Figure 67: Structure 2, showing twinned face stone walls and Units 3A1 and 3A2, facing east.*

In order to determine functional and structural differences within Structure 2, one 1m x 1m unit was excavated between the face stone walls, and a second was placed adjacent and north of this unit. These were named Unit 3A1 and 3A2, respectively. Both were excavated to a depth of 50cm in
10cm intervals, until large, immovable, and impassible rocks were encountered which terminated both units. The artifact assemblage from Unit 3A1 consisted mainly of mortar fragments, totalling 125 with a weight of 2,491g. This also included an orange brick fragment, one orange tile fragment, a grey tile fragment 27mm thick, and five wrought nails. Ceramics included five sherds of Creamware, one sherd of Westerwald stoneware, one sherd of hand painted floral tin enamel ware, and three Amerindian sherds; two sand tempered, brown burnished sherds, and one identical but unburnished.

Unit 3A2 contained somewhat less mortar, with a total of 125 fragments weighing in at 1,830g. Somewhat curiously, though, most of the ceramics recovered from this unit were Amerindian rather than colonial. Eight Amerindian sherds were found, with an MNI of 5. The two colonial consisted of just Staffordshire slipware and Chinese porcelain.

**Structure 3**

Structure 3 consists of a boulder with a natural depression which collects rain water, surrounded to the west and south by aloe. Water retention was improved by an early colonist by setting two face stones into the lowest lip of the depression with mortar in order to increase the hollow’s volume. This provided short-term source of potable water for residents, or may have instead been used as a watering hole for livestock.

![Figure 68: Structure 3, facing southwest.](image)

**Shovel test pits**

The six shovel test pits excavated by 10cm arbitrary levels on the second level of SB 037 turned up no artifacts. Shovel Test Pits (STP) 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 were excavated across the extent of Level 2 of...
the site to a depth of 60cm, at which point immovable rocks were encountered. STP 4 was excavated to 90cm, and a layer of sandy loam was encountered at a depth of 85cm, which demonstrated the extent of this layer which was originally encountered at Level 1.

1m x 1m test units

Four 1m x 1m test units were instrumental in determining activity areas of the site, and for gauging the relative longevity of human occupation periods. Test units 2 and 3, unfortunately, did not extend past 60cm due to large and immovable boulders in this layer. It appears that during the colonial era, the area which featured these test units was subject to significant erosion from upper levels of the site, since eighteenth century artifacts such as creamware were found to a depth of 60cm to 70cm, while Amerindian ceramics extended from the surface to the same level. Importantly, though, this erosional zone did not extend past this depth, as the black layer, which begins at approximately 80cm across the site, never contained colonial artifacts or Amerindian ceramics. The colonial ceramics from these units consisted primarily of tin enamel ware, with smaller proportions of white salt glaze stoneware and creamware. The tin enamel ware from Test Unit 2 was notably composed of some identifiable seventeenth century varieties, such as a lead-glaze back purple dash-charger, and fruit-and-berries scene plate. Mortar fragments and some red and Ijssel brick were recovered as well in all the test units, which supports the notion that Structure 2 was scavenged for brick and other salvageable materials after its abandonment. Six wrought nails were found between the units as well. Relatively few faunal remains were recovered in the layers above 80cm. These consisted mostly of fragments of long bones, presumably from dietary remains from the colonial homestead’s inhabitants. No fish remains were recovered above 80cm, but this could be due to their fragility within an erosional zone. Shell remains were few, and consisted of 10 unidentifiable fragments, and one Potamopyrgus coronatus, obtained from the rocky shorelines of the island. The Amerindian assemblage collected from above the 80cm level was small, and consisted of just 11 ceramics and one transluscent, tan coloured chert uniface flake. These can be divided into two basic types: unburnished, brown hollowwares with sand temper (seven sherds), and burnished, bright red ceramics with reduced cores and sand temper (two sherds).

At 70cm, the soil begins transitioning from an infertile sandy clay to a more fertile sandy loam, becoming black sandy loam at 80cm with significant proportions of black ash, but remarkable absence of charcoal. A whole Strombus gigas, and one modified shell were found in this layer at the bottom of Test Unit 2. In Test Unit 4, at 80cm, a thermally altered black chert flake was found, along with half of a large stone grinding platform, and the top of a large brain coral cobble. Deeper excavations in Test Unit 1 to 80cm subsequently demonstrated the extent of this layer. This featured three black chert
flakes and two large stones used as grinding platforms, evidenced by their very smooth, flat surface textures, and usewear hollows on this face from repeated striking. Based on these results, test Unit 4 was selected as an anchor point for creating a 5m x 10m machine excavator pit to reveal the top of the archaic layer. As such it was renamed Unit 4A as part of the matrix of units within this area.

5m x 10m excavation unit

Having noted the potential for a deep Archaic-age layer based on results from Test Units 1 and 4, in the interest of time, a 5m x 10m area was excavated 60cm deep by a machine excavator with a shallow, non-toothed bucket to enable a large swathe of the Archaic layer to be carefully exposed by trowel and shovel. The spoil pile from the excavator was combed through by rake and shovel over the following two weeks, and any artifacts recovered were given the context “Above Black General”. A string grid of 1m x 1m units was established, spanning numerically 1-10 from north to south along the 10m extent, and alphabetically from A-E from east to west along the 5m expanse. Unit 1A was situated in the extreme northwest, while its counterpart Unit 10E was located in the southeast. Due to time constraints, the southern wall was not able to be expanded to correct the angle approached by the machine excavator; as such, Units 10C, 10D were only partially excavated by hand, and Unit 10E was not excavated. Excavations by shovel and trowel progressed on a unit-by-unit basis, removing soil until the dark, sandy loam layer which characterizes the Archaic layer was exposed. The soil removed from this procedure was all sifted and bagged per unit as the “Above Black” context, or by the acronym “AB”. This layer also contained the colonial era artifacts relevant to this discussion. A colonial period intrusion into the “black” layer was noted in Unit 1C, expanding around into adjacent units. Within this unit, the remains of a large, articulated ungulate were found; unfortunately, approximately half of the remains were destroyed by overzealous digging by the machine excavator operator. Some ceramics were recovered from the excavator spoil pile, including a footed, orange-body lead glaze coarse earthenware hollowware vessel, nine sherds of early creamware, two sherds of tin enamel ware, including one with a lead glaze exterior, one sherd of Whieldon ware, and one sherd of blue transfer print pearlware. Details of the excavation and results relative to the Amerindian layers can be found in the site report (SABARC site report #1, 2014).

Test Unit 2 grave

In December 2015, the author along with a small team from Leiden University expanded Test Unit 2 into a 2m x 2m unit in order further investigate the Archaic component of the site. This was selected for further research as it was one of the few undisturbed areas left at the site following the construction of the new electricity plant. However, the level at which the “black” layer was expected
was not encountered, and instead eighteenth century ceramics were noted in the same levels as presumed Archaic-period artifacts such as *Strombus gigas* shells stripped of their lips for tool use. It had become clear that the soil had been disturbed. At a depth of approximately 120cm human remains were encountered, lying prone and facing east. The remains of a well-developed fetus were also noted within the pelvis. As the last colonial occupation layer appeared to end at about 60cm, this represents a very shallow burial. The burial shaft was not lined with rocks to form a vault, and was instead a simple pit. No coffin nails were noted, nor were there any goods interred with the individual, and no clothing artifacts such as buttons or fasteners were noted. Some copper stains were present on the skull, however, to suggest a veil that was pinned to her hair. A sherd of early creamware was found flush to the skull alongside a very worn *Strumbus gigas* shell with a shorn lip. The creamware allows the burial to be dated with precision. The TPQ for creamware is 1762, while the colonial homestead’s occupation probably ended after the 1772 hurricane, and at most by the later hurricane in 1780.

Strontium, carbon, and oxygen analyses on the woman’s teeth were conducted by Jason Laffoon in 2016. While the carbon and oxygen isotope ratios were unclear as to origin, showing both potential African and Caribbean signatures with a C3 diet, the strontium ratios have a definite West African signature, specifically south of the Sahel through an elevated C4 staple diet of either rice or root crops. This thereby indicates that this individual was a first generation enslaved African. She was almost certainly enslaved by the time of her death due to the style and context of her burial upon an upper class property away from the household, and the fact that there were only four free African descent Sabans listed on the 1780 census. Her status as an enslaved African also sheds some light on Saba’s slave trade. To date the only known documents from the eighteenth century that show enslaved African purchases from Sabans date from the 1721-1727 period on St. Eustatius during its first period as an international slave trade hub. As the woman died between 1762 and 1772/1780 while bearing a child, she was very likely purchased and brought to Saba after the closure of Statia’s first foray into the into this trade.

**SB 037 colonial component discussion**

The colonial period occupation of SB 037 consisted of a homestead which included a house, a large cistern, aloe fields, livestock, and a boulder modified into a watering hole. It was in use from the mid seventeenth century to the third quarter of the eighteenth century; it was probably one of the 140 houses of the island’s total of 180 destroyed by the hurricane of 31 August, 1772, or later by the “Great Hurricane” which ravaged the eastern Caribbean in 1780. This is strongly supported by absence of any colonial ceramic dating later than creamware, save for one tiny piece of transfer print pearlware, which is probably incidental. As the house was not rebuilt, the former owners were probably counted.
among the Sabans that emigrated from the island following the hurricane, or were killed as a result of it. The depth of the colonial deposits testifies both to the rate of erosion due to the expansion of agriculture which occurred across Saba during the colonial period, and ploughing across the site which resulted in Ceramic-age artifacts being found in context with colonial artifacts. Colonial ceramics were found to a depth of 60cm to 70cm in some instances, even though the depth of this deposit only represents approximately 400 years. The house, either the foundations or in whole, was constructed of locally sourced and cobbled face stones, and imported Ijssel and red-colored brick. The southern quarter of Structure 2, between the two lines of face stones, was set with grey and orange tiles. The house fell into ruins, and was evidently scavenged for bricks and tiles, leaving some traces of rubble just south of Test Unit 3. The presence of aloe fields indicates that it was intentionally cultivated, likely by the former residents of the site. The water basin formed by shoring up a natural depression in a boulder with a face stone and mortar attests to the presence of livestock during this period, which included cattle or horses as demonstrated by the intact ungulate recovered from the 5m x 10m pit. Additional insight into their class can be seen through the presence of Whieldon ware, Chinese porcelain, and early creamwares, especially between 1762 to the 1770’s when both creamware and Whieldon ware were fashionable and thus priced accordingly. The cistern ownership, its unique design, the intentional cultivation of surplus aloe, possession of livestock, and ability to keep up with the latest ceramic fashions demonstrates that the residents were probably counted among Saba’s upper class by this time. The chance discovery of the grave as part of the expansion of Test Unit 2 adds further context to the site. It is very likely that this woman was an enslaved African, as her method and style of burial is entirely inconsistent with Saban norms, and her strontium isotope ratios reflect West African ancestry. This also demonstrates that the residents of the homestead owned at least one enslaved African.

SB 036: The Bottom, Privy Pit

Overview and site location

The site SB 036 is located at 17°37’75N and 63°14’40E, on property owned by the Saba School of Medicine, upon the lower slope of “Pepperpot Hill” in The Bottom. Directly below the site is the district of The Bottom called “New Town”, formerly commonly known as “Niggertown”. The author discovered the site on 6 April 2013 while driving down from St. John’s to The Bottom as a large anomaly in the soil stratigraphy in one of two vertical soil profiles created by and bulldozers, below the student residence building. The soil anomaly was a deposit of loamy sand, transitioning down into sandy loam, originating from a stable horizontal layer across the lower profile. It deeply penetrated the lower,
natural layers of red and tan tephra. It measured approximately 2.83 cm wide from the surface, and extended down about 150 cm. Numerous ceramics and faunal remains protruded from the anomaly, and the proportion of Chinese porcelain sherds in relation to other ceramics was immediately apparent. It appears that this was a pit excavated around the early eighteenth century that served as a privy over the next hundred years. Just 8 m to the southeast of the excavation unit were the remains of a cut stone and mortar house foundation and a cistern. However, these were mostly buried by fill from the prior construction project, and could not be studied in detail.

Following a confirmation from HES Construction that they were going to resume construction within four days, permission was obtained from the Saba School of Medicine to proceed with excavations. SABARC students assembled the following day to assist with excavations and surface collections. Excavations were completed mostly by the author working alone over the course of one week. Construction at the site, in fact, never actually resumed until August that year.

![Figure 69: The outline of SB 036 clearly visible from the soil profile created by the excavator, with SABARC students assisting in the foreground.](image)

**Excavation and results**

Due to the time constraints imposed to complete the work, the site was excavated by shovel. An excavation area measuring 280 cm along the length of the profile, and 1.5 m back was delineated, with the contours of the unit following the extents of the soil feature. The first 50 cm of soil were determined to be a layer of modern fill created during the late twentieth century. This was designated as Layer 1. Successive layers were undisturbed prior to this period, and these were divided into 20 cm levels.

The first 50 cm of fill were disregarded archaeologically in terms of its relation to the layers below, as it was significantly disturbed in the late twentieth century, containing items such as scrap
PVC pipe, flagging tape, and a deflated soccer ball. Layer 2 (50cm-70cm) consisted of a loamy sand transitioning to a sandy loam, with four visible oblong features comprised of a loam. Four loamy soil features were noted in Layer 2. While two of them were shallow and harboured no artifacts, within features 3 and 4 lay the remains of a mature, articulated goat, and an articulated kitten, respectively. The head and front quarters of a dog, also articulated, were found within the southwestern profile face of layer 4. This was not removed. The presence of the cat and dog, deposited whole in the privy, is indicative of pet ownership on the part of the groups owning the structure.

There were a total of 3,831 non-faunal artifacts recovered from SB 036, of which 2,132 were ceramics. The depositional sequence of ceramics throughout Layers 2 to 6 represents refuse from the mid nineteenth century back to at least the late seventeenth century, respectively. Disregarding Layer 1, the surface had 992 artifacts, Layer 2 had 1,799 artifacts, Layer 3 had 627, Layer 4 had 147, Layer 5 had 196, Layer 6 had 61, and Layer 7 ended with just 9 artifacts. Scattered throughout Levels 2-5 were 42 sherds of coarse earthenware that are probably Amerindian in origin, but this is uncertain given the colonial context of the other artifacts. Excavations by Josselin de Jong in the first half of the twentieth century were situated downslope of SB 037, which recovered a large assemblage of Amerindian artifacts, including many ceramics. Therefore, these sherds may be surface scatter from the pre-Columbian period that was present during the colonial period, and which were incidentally deposited over time. The figure below displays the MCD per level. Layers 6 and 7 are shown for consistency, though their MCD may be earlier than indicated by the ceramics, due to the small size of the assemblage, and the wide range of date range applied to uncharacteristic tin-enamel ware and stoneware, which both range from 1640 to around 1800.

![Figure 70: SB 036 Mean Ceramic Date](image-url)
The assemblage from SB036 appears to represent a Saban upper-class assemblage, and there were several notable characteristics about this assemblage that differentiate it from others recovered from the island. With particular attention to ceramics, the number, proportion, and consistent presence of Chinese porcelain relative to the rest of ceramic types in the assemblage, per layer and including the surface, is higher than average. Of 2,132 ceramics recovered from SB 036, 202 were either Chinese or European porcelain, comprising 9.47% of the colonial assemblage. Transfer print varieties on pearlware, and later whiteware were preferred, and made up the largest proportion of the assemblage. This was followed by a preference for creamware during the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, represented by Layers 2 and 3. It is worth noting that sponge varieties are only present in Layer 2, and in significantly smaller proportions than will be seen in contemporary assemblages at Middle Island and Palmetto Point. It appears that the household that created the deposits, especially in Layers 2 and 3, purchased ceramics in sets. This is most apparent with spatter pearlware, shell edge ware, transfer print whiteware and pearlware, and creamware. The distribution of ceramic decoration types per layer are listed in Tables 17 to 21 below.

![Figure 71: SB 036, Surface, Ceramics by Décor](image-url)
The nail assemblage had an MNI of 136, with 26 cut nails, of which 25 had machine-made heads, and five wire nails recovered exclusively from Layer 2. The remainder of the assemblage was comprised of wrought nails. Machine-made head cut nails have a TPQ of the early nineteenth century (Wells 1999), while wire nails have a TPQ of around 1880 (Wells 1999), strongly indicative of a mid to late nineteenth century deposition period for Layer 2. Interestingly, 39 wrought nails and 30 unidentifiable nails were also recovered from Layer 2; together, this comprises 81% of the total assemblage. These probably comprise the surviving deposits of the last structure situated over top the privy pit, evidently either left to rot, or dismantled and discarded into the privy pit itself.
The glass assemblage did not feature many readily identifiable or datable vessels outside of generalized forms such as round bottles and case bottles, and its proportion relative to the ceramic assemblage, 423:2,132, is far less than what was seen at Palmetto Point or Middle Island. Interestingly, the surface collection featured 233 sherds, while Layer 2 contained 182, compared to a complete absence of glass in Layers 3 and 4, just 11 sherds in Layer 5, and 1 in Layer 6. This glaring difference between layers is evidence of either an increase in household alcohol consumption by the early to mid-nineteenth century, a shift in deposition sites for alcohol bottles during this period, or relative abstinence from alcohol consumption by the household through time. The identifiable elements of the glass assemblage do aid in dating Level 2, however, and, together with the nail assemblage, suggests a date range for Layer 2 extending later than indicated by the MCD of 1827. The P.F. Heering second generation bottle is reliably dated to a manufacture between 1850 and 1865 (http://danish-bottles.dk/heeringarticle.htm, last accessed 27/8/2015), and three case bottle bases with pointed corners indicate deposition prior to the 1860’s (http://www.sha.org/bottle, last accessed 27/8/2015). No free blown glass sherds were identified in the Layer 2 assemblage.

The artifacts catalogued as “miscellaneous” bear some interest. Two glass beads were recovered from Levels 2 and 3 respectively, one 11mm diameter black glass bead with a green line spiraling from hole to hole, and a 7mm diameter turquoise-coloured glass bead with twenty-one facets. This is a type of bead is commonly known as “Russian Blue”. It was manufactured in Bohemia during the nineteenth century, and commonly traded by the Russians and the Dutch (Hume 1969). One 4mm diameter shell bead was also recovered from Level 3, but this is probably Amerindian in origin. From Level 5, a very round fragment of coral was found, 18mm in diameter, which may have been used as a game piece, such as a marble. Two flat, rounded, modified ceramic sherds were found from Level 2. These could have been used either as game pieces, or as the body-base for a cloth button. These are made by enveloping the token with a patch of cloth, twisting the back together, and sewing it shut. It can then be sewn into a garment to replace a lost button (Jay Haviser 2013, personal communication). In Level 2, a 24k gold teardrop-shaped filigree pendant was found, missing the eyelet to string onto a necklace. While trade finds of gold in itself is not indicative of upper class, its presence among other upper class vectors in this assemblage further strengthens this assessment.

Four olive shells were found at SB 036, the only examples since found on Saba. One was recovered from the surface collection, and the other three were from Level 3. The tip of one was shorn off, suggesting that it was used as jewelry. Shells were not known to have been commonly used as jewelry by Sabans who did not identify with African ancestry (Johnson 2014, personal communication), while it was common among both cultures of West Africa, and enslaved Africans in the New World (Lee 2011). This shell was probably employed as an adornment item by African-descent people (Katz-
Hyman & Rice 2011). Strengthening their association with jewelry lies in that the rest of the shell assemblage from SB 036 is tiny. Level 2 harboured just one Chiton sp. one keyhole limpet (Fissurella nodosa), a fragment of Purpura patula, locally known as the “Frenchman’s whilk”, and a bivalve shell. The only other shells present were three fragments of Cittarium pica were present in Layer 4, which may be from secondary use by the Caribbean soldier crab (Coenobita clypeatus) that were attracted to the food refuse in the pit. Conversely, over three kilograms of non-shell faunal material was recovered from the privy pit. The remains included large mammals such as cattle (Bos) and goats (Capra); wild avian species; smaller sharks or rays; large, fast swimming fish species such as tuna (Thunnus sp.) and jacks (Caranx sp.); and smaller reef fish species such as triggerfish (Balistoides), squirrelfish (Hollocendtridae), and parrotfish (Scaridae). Several of the Bos remains featured butchering marks that included both parallel and perpendicular cuts and chops to large bones. At least two bone cutlery handle fragments were found in the privy pit, decorated with a series of horizontal incisions. While the faunal diet is composed of a wide range of terrestrial, avian, and marine species, shellfish remains are almost completely absent in comparison. All other trash pits on Saba excavated by the author as part of this research, and others excavated or seen across Saba, have so far all contained sizeable proportions of shellfish relative to other faunal remains. This includes high elevation sites such as Behind-the-Ridge in the upper reaches of Hell’s Gate. This shows both that they were a common component of the Saban diet, and that they were accessible to all Sabans regardless of distance from shorelines. Their scarcity in SB 036, therefore, demonstrates that they were deliberately excluded from the diet of this site’s households for over one hundred years. Intertidal shellfish, therefore, are a common component of low class diets, and probably not considered fare for Saba’s upper class.
Figure 76: 24k gold filigree pendant, 50cm-70cm, SB 036. Black/white scale at 1cm.

SB 36 privy pit in context

The material recovered from the household privy pit at this site is strongly indicative of an upper class household or series of households from throughout the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century. Spatially, the site is located in The Bottom, where most of Saba’s upper class was concentrated throughout its pre-emancipation colonial history. Similar to the household at SB 037, there was more of an effort to keep up with the latest fashion of ceramics from northern Europe than on other sites on Saba. This is most visible on Levels 3 and 4, and the ceramic assemblage itself featured the largest proportions of Chinese porcelain per layer than any other relevant site on Saba. The gold filigree pendant also lends support to their wealth in this regard. The modified olive shell in particular is notable. In a pure colonial context it would suggest use by people of African descent since white Sabans were not known to have used shells as jewelry, and these have not been found in any other colonial context on Saba, which includes intertidal shellfish middens. However, olive shell jewelry has also been recovered from pre-Columbian contexts on Saba, therefore its temporal provenience is presently uncertain. This assertion is strengthened by the near absence of intertidal shellfish as part of the site’s households throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which strongly implicates shellfish to a component of a low class diet, and not commonly consumed by Saba’s
upper class. This site is important for comparing artifact assemblages across other sampled sites on Saba relative to class and race, as it is the single largest collection of material that can be confidently ascribed to a series of enslaved African-owning upper class Saban households throughout the eighteenth to mid nineteenth centuries.

**SB 027: Palmetto Point**

**Overview, Site Location, and Geology**

Palmetto Point, better known as “Mary’s Point” in the present, is an abandoned village located above Well’s Bay and Torrens Point in the northwest of Saba. The site was surveyed by Havis in 1985, who noted a material occupation ranging from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and excavated by the author in 2009 as part of his Research Masters thesis. The site is heavily overgrown with *Pimenta racemosa*, *Swietenia mahagoni*, and *Coccoloba uvifera*, and to a lesser extent *Annona muricata*. Also noted were one *Citrus aurantium*, and one *Tamarindus indica* near beginning of the village from the trail leading from Well’s Bay. The settlement area and upslope hinterlands of Palmetto Point coincide with an area of arable land, approximately 500m upslope by 200m across in area. There is a layer of organic topsoil about 8cm deep across the site, which transitions into a sandy loam for the next 15cm, on average. The volcanic deposits below this level in the aforementioned area are characterized by Roobol & Smith (2004:Plate 2) as “unlithified to weakly lithified andesite block and ash flow deposits, including some pumiceous deposits and fluvatile reworked material”. A hot spring “hot enough to poach an egg” was once found at Well’s Bay, and was eventually overtaken by the sea prior to 1938 (Kruythoff 1939:105). The North Coast Trail runs through Palmetto Point and continues to the Sulphur Mine. There is an area upslope of the trail between the village and Great Hill that is rife with terracing, and to date it has not been mapped, so its total area is unknown. However, based upon a pedestrian survey, it is clear that the area was greater than what would have been necessary for subsistence agriculture for Palmetto Point residents, so this region would have been cultivating agricultural surplus for trade within Saba, or off-island export, most likely to St. Eustatius in the eighteenth century, and St. Thomas in the nineteenth century (Espersen 2009).

Palmetto Point was considered a remote and isolated village even in the nineteenth century, with journeys to The Bottom by foot taking about two hours to complete, without a significant load (Crane 1971:308, Pearl Zagers, personal communication 2008). The site is currently situated at the top of a steep and rapidly eroding gut which is consuming the site. One cistern is half destroyed and lies exposed upon the face of the cliff. A photo taken in 1910 of Palmetto Point was taken from a vantage point that would be impossible in the present, testifying to the rate of erosion occurring in this area.
(Will Johnson collection). On the north side of Torrens Point, there is a gut running down into Cave of Rum Bay which is experiencing frequent mass erosion. This began in 2012 with Tropical Storm Raphael, with periodic events every couple of months thereafter to 2014. It is a matter of time before Palmetto Point is completely destroyed.

What remains of Palmetto Point was founded during the last half of the eighteenth century based upon archaeological research by Espersen (2009) for the original purpose of exporting agricultural surplus to St. Eustatius. Its foundation period also coincided with a significant increase in island population, which would have created pressure to expand settlement and agriculture beyond the southern half of the island to the uninhabited and largely uncultivated north. The site has seen continuous erosion since its abandonment, and in the present the cliff has claimed half of a cistern which lies exposed at the edge. Pearl Zagers related to the author in 2008 that cliff erosion claimed part of her family graveyard in a single morning event. Indeed, the entire north coast of Saba has experienced steady erosion for thousands of years; what is now known as Diamond Rock, a rock protrusion located approximately 380 meters offshore northwest of Torrens Point, is actually the remains of more erosion-resistant rock that was once connected by land to Saba (Rahn 2015). Therefore, it is very likely that earlier settlement features that once existed at Palmetto Point are have now been lost to erosion. Will Johnson (personal communication), among others, maintains that Palmetto Point and Middle Island were Saba’s first two colonial period settlements. While no archaeological and geological evidence exists for such at Middle Island, the continuous erosion at Palmetto Point makes this possible.

*Figure 77: Schoolchildren at Palmetto Point, circa 1930’s, facing southwest with House 7. Photo courtesy of Will Johnson.*
Palmetto Point in the oral and documentary record

In 1815, at least four houses were present at Palmetto Point, based upon the E.H. Columbine map of the island (BNAr, Kew CO 700/WestIndies33). The estate of Peter Collins, a resident of Palmetto Point who died in 1815, indicates that some degree of wealth was present in his household; evidenced primarily by the value of Sary, an enslaved African, and the pair of gold buttons. The inventory is outlined below on Table 4, with the original text (DNAr, 1.05.13.01 #542). Currency is pieces of eight, stivers, and bitts.

Table 4: Estate of Peter Collins of Palmetto Point, 1815

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Purchaser</th>
<th>Pcs. 8</th>
<th>Bitts</th>
<th>Stivers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Half of the House and land within the Wall</td>
<td>Widow Mary Collins</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negroe woman, Sary</td>
<td>Thomas Zagers</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A water jarr</td>
<td>Thomas Zagers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A tea pot</td>
<td>Widow Mary Collins</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A pair of gold buttons</td>
<td>Orphan Peter Collins</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A tea kittle</td>
<td>Widow Mary Collins</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A broken mahogany table</td>
<td>Thomas Zagers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 cups 3 saucers</td>
<td>Thomas Zagers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A looking glass</td>
<td>Widow Mary Collins</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedstead</td>
<td>Widow Mary Collins</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A spot of land in the flat</td>
<td>William Simmons</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do. Do. Near Flora Woods</td>
<td>Peter Collins</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The water jar is also an interesting addition. In a previous publication by the author (2014) it was suggested that by the mid to late nineteenth century at Palmetto Point, residents would have had to collect water from rooftops to supplement their main supply derived from ground-catchment cisterns, as the population was gradually outstripping the available water supply from this source. The water jar then demonstrates that ground-catchment cisterns, if present during this time, were not the sole source of potable water at the site.

Figure 79: A house on the island of St. Bartholomew using a water jar for catchment. Photo courtesy of Will Johnson.

In 1823, the Burgher List of Saba lists nine heads of household for the “Palmetto Point Quarter”, which likely also encompassed Middle island. The list included James Horton Sr., James Horton Jr., John Beal, Peter Simmons, Peter Hassell, John Zeagors, Thomas Zeagors, Peter Collins, and James Hassell (DNAr 1.05.13.01 #319:207). In the same year, James Horton Sr. was listed as the “District Master” on a list of military and naval rankings on Saba, collected by the Lieutenant Governor (DNAr 1.05.13.01 #319:196). The surname Beal originates from St. Bartholomew, and families of Beals were known to have lived at Middle Island in the nineteenth century (Will Johnson, personal communication 2012, 2013; James Johnson, personal communication 2013). The 2013 telephone directory of St. Bartholomew was also replete with listings for the surname Beal, and the cemetery in St. Jean also contains grave markers many as well, extending back to the early nineteenth century. In 1850, the settlement had expanded to include seven houses, all clustered upslope of Torrens Point and extending southwest along the cliff’s edge (BNAr, CO 700/StChristopherandNevis14). The village population peaked in 1865 with a population of 75 residents in 11 houses; just four years earlier, there were 9 houses between 72 residents, 14 of which were enslaved Africans (Saba Baptismal Registers,
St. Paul’s Conversion Church, Saba). This 1865 census was written in the blank pages preceding the baptism records, and is shown in Table 19, in the Appendix. Palmetto Point was abandoned in 1934 by an evacuation order issued by the Island Government, due to a concern of a lack of water, limited access to medical attention, poor health, erosion, and uncorroborated reports of schizophrenia. However, residents had begun emigrating to other villages prior to this time, most notably Hell’s Gate. Those residents evacuated in 1936 were resettled to an area known as “The Promised Land” in the southeastern corner of The Bottom.

Accounts of life for those living at Palmetto Point were collected from personal interviews of former residents by Julia Crane (1971). One account by Pearl Zagers vividly describes the hardships (Crane 1971:26):

Oh it was a hard life, me child. They never had priests or doctors to come out to Mar y Point most of the time. If it had to be that a doctor had to come, he would go around by boat and be landed at Well Bay; and by the time he got there the doctor was too tired to do much. It was hard to get water – only a few little cisterns. To wash they would have to go down to the water and wait for water to come in the Well – sometimes that was a long time. And if you boiled vegetables in the water it would even turn red, because the water was not so good. Sometimes we would not like the water from the spring and we had to take bottles and carry them to Middle Island to get water. And there was no shop there at all. If you could muster a cent you had to come up to The Bottom to buy anything before you could get to eat it.

There are six cisterns located at Palmetto Point, and thirteen house foundations; the largest is cut stone and mortar, and the rest are dry stones. The disproportion of cisterns to households indicates that access to cistern water was shared or negotiated between residents. This created a situation where those families that owned cisterns could exercise social and economic leverage in the internal exchange network of Palmetto Point, especially during periods of drought (Espersen 2014). Water was also available from the aptly-named Well’s Bay. This was not always reliable source, as ocean swells would contaminate the water and render it non-potable (Crane 1971:306). The number of residents at Palmetto Point after 1850 to the early twentieth century, relative to average rainfall and the number, volume, and catchment sizes of the cisterns created constant situation where the water supply was unpredictable (Espersen 2014). This eventually contributed to its abandonment and evacuation, as corroborated in the documentary record.

The diet of residents by the early twentieth century, and likely in the preceding centuries, included “Dutch potatoes”, sweet potatoes, tannia, cassava, sheep, goats, and fish, either fresh or salted. Based upon faunal remains in the Trash Pit that could be identified by the author, this also included significant quantities of *Fissurella nodosa*, *Chitonidae*, and some *Purpura patula* and *Cittarium pica*. Notably, the predominance of keyhole limpets and chitons in the Trash Pit echoes the diet of enslaved Africans at the Flat Point sugar plantation, while these were almost completely lacking at SB 036. Another former resident interviewed by Crane described the diet (Crane 1971:26):
There were many days in the old times you couldn’t get even dried fish or pork or any of the things in Mary Point, where we had hard times. We would even live on tannia heads. The tannia heads were very, very bitter. There were times when you would be very glad to get a sweet potato to make it your whole meal – and maybe you would put lime juice on them to be able to eat them. Those who had no people in the family who could catch fish would come to your yard and work on the cleaning of the fish in the hopes that they would get a head or two. The people in Mary Point had it very hard indeed. In fact, they had to carry the clothes all the way to Well Bay to wash and it was a terrible distance. That was in dry weather when the few cisterns they had would go dry.

This testimony also describes the widespread poverty present at Palmetto Point by the early twentieth century. The residents of Palmetto Point, by the late nineteenth century, were seen as socially backwards, inbred, and represented the lowest class of white Sabans on a village basis. This stigma continues in the present among Sabans towards residents and descendants of inhabitants of The Promised Land. This sentiment was echoed by foreigners as well. A. Grenfell Price, in The Geographical Review of 1934, exemplifies this in his narratives of Palmetto Point. In addition to titling his section on Palmetto Point as “Marypoint: A Degenerate Community”, he continues with his descriptions of the village throughout the article:

...and the present doctor has found no trace yet of hookworm, although one suspects its presence at Marypoint, where no sanitation exists... Yet, except in the tiny village of Marypoint, inbreeding does not seem to have destroyed fertility, stamina, or ability... The worst effects of isolation and inbreeding are to be seen in Marypoint. Here a community of some thirty to forty persons is composed almost entirely of seven families of Sagors, all closely intermarried and interrelated. The land seems fair, the settlement was once quite flourishing and progressive, and a few of the people still possess good physique. The diet is miserable, consisting mainly of bananas and sweet potatoes, cassava, and fish. Little effort is made to provide the children with greens or milk on an island where vegetables grow in profusion and goats are numerous. The people have even lost their former knowledge of baking and carry bread, biscuit, and condensed milk from Bottom by “head” (Price 1934:55-56).

This is similar to the regard ascribed to residents of the Ozark Mountains in the U.S.A., referred to derogatorily as “hillbillies” (Espersen 2009; Horning 1999). It is curious in that although Middle Island and Palmetto Point were contemporary villages of similar size, both dependent upon subsistence agriculture and centered around water access, fishing, and anchorage available from Well’s Bay, there is no oral or documentary accounts of this designation having been given to residents of Middle Island. This is probably due to the different racial composition of Middle Island relative to Palmetto Point, and its closer proximity to The Bottom, therefore making it less remote.

It is likely that most, if not all enslaved Africans at Palmetto Point lived in the same house as their owners. The section of the island’s 1861 census provides details into the number of houses in each settlement, including those made of thatch (NArC AN NAC4 Gouverneur 103 RT). Given that there are 13 dry stone house foundations known at the site in the present, it is unlikely that thatch houses
predominated to any degree at Palmetto Point. There are also no remains of structures similar to those encountered at Spring Bay Flat, Spring Bay, Tannia Ground, and Hell’s Gate, with the two dry stone walls projecting from the face of a boulder. Since the early economy of the site was based upon agricultural export, later phasing into subsistence agriculture, enslaved Africans would have been for the most part engaged in field labour, but it is possible that some may have been employed aboard ships as sailors as well. Others may have seen work as fishermen, either from shore around Well’s Bay and Torrens Point, or aboard the few boats that were kept by residents of Palmetto Point and Middle Island in the bay, which typically fished around the Saba Bank (Crane 1971:306).

**Burial practices**

There are up to five known burials at Palmetto Point, all consisting of dry stone outlines. There are potentially three graves distinctively marked with long, stone ovals just 4m upslope of Cistern 2, with no other stones surrounding them on the surface. These may be associated with House 1. There is a stone cross that was erected next to House 9 in the late twentieth century, and another grave now covered with a cement slab with a missing plaque erected northeast of House 5. Both of these two graves follow the Saban tradition of yard burials. Given this retroactive marking, it appears that in the present, Sabans are identifying less with a tradition of stone piles as grave markers in the present day.

**Archaeological excavations**

Archaeological excavation results are detailed in “From Folklore to Folk History: Contextualizing Settlement at Palmetto Point, Saba, Dutch Caribbean” (Espersen 2009). Excavation units included a 2m x 1.5m unit at the base of a large terrace which turned out to be a trash pit, a 1x1m unit underneath a rock overhang which provided definitive evidence of the first colonial settlement period at Palmetto Point, four 1x1 test domestic units, a 3m x 2m shovel test pit, and extensive surface collections. In early 2012, excavations at the Trash Pit were expanded towards the foot of the large terrace immediately adjacent to the southeast, but had to be halted at Level 3 so that the soil beneath the terrace would not be undermined; further excavations may have resulted in a swift and storied end to this research. The artifact assemblages from Palmetto Point were re-catalogued, in addition to the new material recovered from this excavation. The most intensive occupation period at Palmetto Point ranges between the mid to late nineteenth century, based on artifact assemblages primarily from the Trash Pit and Rock Overhang (Espersen 2009).
Figure 80: SB 027, Trash Pit 1, Artifact Type Composition by Percentage, 5073 Total

Figure 81: SB 027, Trash Pit 1, Ceramics by Décor
There were several noteworthy artifacts recovered from excavations at Palmetto Point. In the Trash Pit between Layers 2 and 3, 25 horizontal links of a gold-plated women’s Chatelaine belt were found, which dates to the mid to late nineteenth century. Each link had a hinged clip on the back, which was evidently used to fasten the belt to a backing, such as a sash or leather strap belt. Several coins were found in the trash pit, including a silver 10-cent piece from St. Thomas dated 1848, a 1-cent coin dated 1854 from the U.S.A., a 2 sous coin from Cayenne, French Guiana dated 1789, and two Dutch ½ cent coins from the 1880’s. The coin from St. Thomas was not surprising, as the island was the foremost regional trading center between Puerto Rico and Montserrat in the nineteenth century. A 17mm diameter clay marble was found in the trash pit, which may have been the remains from a Cobb-type bottle. Two clay marbles and one glass marble recovered from the House 1 domestic context at Middle Island, so this marble from Palmetto Point was probably used in children’s games. The body of a small, unglazed kaolin female doll with 4/0 was found in the 2x3m shovel test pit, along with a tiny, 8mm diameter bone china toy teacup, further evidence of children’s activities at the site. A hoe head, two axe heads, and a carpenter’s plane provide testament to types of manual labour in everyday life at Palmetto Point. A total of 48 slate fragments with 7 slate pencil fragments were recovered from the trash pit alone, which is strongly indicative of a certain degree of literacy. In 1910, a children’s school teacher was present at Palmetto Point for several years, known locally as “Skerritt”, although he met with limited success with his students (Pearl Zagers, personal communication 2008).

Most of the glass assemblage in the trash pit dated from the mid nineteenth century to the site’s abandonment in 1936, with some outliers such as a mid to late eighteenth century bottle neck with finish. The quantity of glass suggests that drinking was commonplace at Palmetto Point, with bottle origins from northern Europe, the U.S.A., and Canada. An MNI of eleven medicine bottles were

![Figure 82: SB 027, Trash Pit 1, Glass by Vessels](image)
recovered, which would have been seen a less expensive alternative than paying for the doctor’s trip for services to Palmetto Point. These costs are listed in the Middle Island section of this chapter.

The ceramic assemblage from Palmetto Point is characterized by lower value wares representative mostly of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most were non-descript whitewares and pearlwares, with low-cost sponge-type wares and annular wares as the most common decorative varieties. Later varieties of transfer print pearlwares and whitewares are also present in smaller proportions, such as the “wild rose” variant and coloured transfers such as browns, purples, and reds. The European porcelains appear to be varieties from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. A finely-detailed hand painted sherd dating from some time between 1860 to 1880 has been identified as a commemorative hollowware vessel of Princess Alexandra of Denmark, who was born in 1844, served as Queen from 1902-1910, and died in 1924. As a commemorative piece, it most likely dates to either 1863, when she married Albert, Prince of Wales and heir apparent to Queen Victoria, and in the same year her father was crowned as the Danish King Christian IX, or 1902, when she was made Queen consort to Edward VII. This testifies again to the importance of St. Thomas as a trade destination for Palmetto Point residents and other Sabans during this time.

Saba-style wooden houses at Palmetto Point were all constructed upon dry stone foundations, except for House 5, also the largest, which was built upon a cut stone and mortar foundation. House dimensions for Palmetto Point are listed below on Table 5 (Espersen 2009:70):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House</th>
<th>Dimensions (m)</th>
<th>Area (m2)</th>
<th>Last House Owners Prior to 1936</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.5 x 3.7</td>
<td>27.75</td>
<td>Peter Zagers = Yda Hassel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.6 x 3.8</td>
<td>25.08</td>
<td>Henry Johnson = Ignacia Bail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.7 x 4.2</td>
<td>28.14</td>
<td>Salomon Zagers = Anita Zagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Grandparents of Carl Zagers'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>father's side)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.1 x 5.4</td>
<td>43.74</td>
<td>&quot;Theresa&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Uninhabited during Carl Zagers'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>residence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.3 x 5.3</td>
<td>43.99</td>
<td>Tommy Zagers = Jane Anne Zagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.2 x 3.5</td>
<td>18.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5 x 3.8</td>
<td>24.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.3 x 4.0</td>
<td>25.20</td>
<td>&quot;Old Missy&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.0 x 4.7</td>
<td>37.60</td>
<td>Pinky Horton-Zagers (née Zagers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.4 x 4.0</td>
<td>29.60</td>
<td>William James Simmons = Lily May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.7 x 3.8</td>
<td>29.26</td>
<td>John Henry Zagers = Mary-Ellen Zagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.0 x 3.5</td>
<td>24.50</td>
<td>William Thomas = Elizabeth (later to Joseph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>(unknown)</td>
<td>(unknown)</td>
<td>Collins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>(unknown)</td>
<td>29.81</td>
<td>Material Grandparents, C.Zagers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These houses are smaller than average across the island. Most would have contained just two rooms, and some, such as House 6, would have been too small for any practical interior divisions. The
implications of housing at Palmetto Point relative poverty, and their context within the rest of Saba, are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

**Palmetto Point in context**

Although re-analysis of archaeological and documentary research at Palmetto Point from the author’s previous research did not reveal much in terms of direct evidence regarding free and enslaved Africans, it provides valuable insights with regards to class and class consciousness between white residents of the village and the rest of Saba in the nineteenth century, and resultant differences in material culture. Despite the presence of a considerable number of enslaved Africans living at Palmetto Point by 1861, no evidence has been found of separate living structures. This is compounded by the difficulty that enslaved Africans were known to have lived in the same residence as their owners, which complicates interpretations of the material record. In particular, the site provides a trove of comparative data to Middle Island, a contemporary, primarily free African-descent village of the same size and equidistant from Well’s Bay, but more accessible from The Bottom.

**SB 026: Middle Island**

**Overview and site location**

Middle Island is located at approximately 17°38′12″N, 63°15′5″W, at an average elevation of 162m above sea level. The settlement area of the village was limited to the southern extents of a finger which terminates abruptly into high cliffs that border the ocean. The site is now overgrown with *Swietenia mahogony* and *Pimenta racemosa* of similar age and size, although during the occupation period the site would have been mostly barren of trees. Some *Annona muricata* are scattered across the site, and in the gut that separates Cow Pasture from Middle Island, several *Carica papaya* were noted as well. At the trailhead at Middle Island to Cow Pasture, just east of Cisterns 2 and 3, there is a large Tamarind tree (*Tamarindus indica*), which was also noted in Haviser’s survey (1985). James Johnson (personal communication 2015), the seasoned trail guide for the Saba Conservation Foundation, has noted that tamarind trees appear to have been planted upon the trail linking the villages of Cow Pasture, Middle Island, and Palmetto Point, as a means to demarcate beginning and end of each village on the path. Haviser’s (1985) survey noted a nineteenth and early twentieth century occupation period at Middle Island.

The soils at the site are identical to the more fertile section at Palmetto Point, described previously, with a top layer of loam of about 6-8cm. The slopes above House 2 were terraced and cultivated, while the entire area downslope (west) of Trash Pit 1 to the cliff edges was unmodified.
This would have been ideal pasture ground for cattle, as the cliffs surrounding the north, west, and southern limits of the finger formed a natural fence. Indeed, cattle pasture at Middle Island was noted as late as 1909 in E. J. Brill’s survey of Dutch West Indian flora (1909:15). Extensive pedestrian surveys were carried out at Middle Island from 2012 to 2014. The site generally lacked surface features beyond dry stone terraces, despite being home to 70 residents in 1865. There are only surface remains of two cut stone and mortar houses, designated as House 1 and House 2, a rectangular cobblestone floor which was likely enclosed by a wattle house, a dry stone house foundation, five cisterns, a small well, and a graveyard of at least nine individuals. Two artifact concentration areas were located along the southern extents of the site, which were termed Trash Pits 1 and 2.

**Middle Island in the oral and documentary records**

Middle Island scarcely appears in Saba’s documentary record, and those records that do pertain to the village either mention the village in passing, or involve an inhabitant or inhabitants discernable only through extensive cross referencing between documents. The site, either in portion or in its entirety, comprised the northwestern most extent of the Dinze Plantation (SBRM:29/1/1827). By the late eighteenth century, sections of the present-day site were owned by free Sabans of African descent, and white Sabans. By corroborating between the Saba Vendue Book of 1780-1815 (DNAr 1.05.13.01 #542-543), the 1780 Census (Will Johnson Collection), and the aforementioned various document holdings at the Saba Planning Bureau, one of the first known inhabitants of Middle Island
by 12 April 1815 was a free black woman named Flora Wood, along with her son and daughter. Another early inhabitant by 3 May 1820 was a 63-year old free black man named Talamack Winfield and his wife, who accused Flora Woods of selling his bull while she only owned one quarter of it, but later determined that his wife sold it without informing him. He was ordered to pay the court costs as a result (DNAr 1.05.13.01 #319, #540.1). Peter Collins Sr. of Palmetto Point owned land in Middle Island by 12 April 1815, which was purchased following his death on account of his child son Peter Collins by Edward Beaks (DNAr 1.05.13.01 #542-543). Whether the younger Peter Collins actually inhabited the land later in his life is not certain. The first depiction of the village in the documentary record extends to 1816 on the Columbine map of Saba, where one house is visible at the site (BNAr, Kew CO 700/WestIndies33). On the 1850 British Admiralty map of Saba, four houses are depicted at Middle Island, extending downslope and close to the southern cliff of the gut separating Middle Island from Cow Pasture. These depictions are accurate as the 1848 census for Saba lists four houses present at Middle Island (NArC AN 84). This census is listed in Table 17, in the Appendix. The upper house depicted is well positioned to be House 2, and the second as House 1. The other two are curious, in that the cartographer was likely including wattle and thatch houses, since Houses 1 and 3 are the only two in the site that have house foundations. The lower two houses are in the vicinity of Trash Pit 1, and may have contributed to its deposits, as the assemblage is contemporary to this map.

Curiously, the 1823 Burgher List for Saba does not list any African descent surnames for Palmetto Point Quarter, let alone the island as a whole (DNAr 1.05.13.01 #319:207). Palmetto Point Quarter included Middle Island, and thus should have included at least the household of Talamack Winfield. The list of burghers includes, in order of appearance: James Horton Sr., James Horton Jr., John Beal, Peter Simmons, Peter Hassell, John Zeagors, Thomas Zeagors, Peter Collins, and James Hassell. James Horton Sr. is listed as the “District Master” of Palmetto Point, which denoted an island-wide military ranking system organized by the Island Government. However, of the five districts, Palmetto Point did not have residents with any higher rankings such as Corporals, Sargeants, 1st/2nd Lieutenant, and Captain (DNAr 1.05.13.01 #319:196). Beals were known to have lived at Middle Island (James Johnson, personal communication 2013; Will Johnson, personal communication 2013), but whether this includes the John Beal mentioned in the burgher list cannot be definitively determined. The Beal surname, interestingly, is relatively common on nearby St. Bartholomew, and James Johnson’s Beal ancestors are supposed to have hailed from the island.

The population of Middle Island increased notably between 1848 and 1865, coinciding with an increase in manumissions of enslaved Africans during this time, followed by emancipation. The earliest census for Middle Island, taken in 1848, lists for free residents 11 men, 10 women, 4 boys, 9 girls, and 1 man born in the West Indies; one enslaved man, and two enslaved boys. Despite a total population
of 38 residents, only four houses are noted in the village. The 1861 census of Saba lists 16 (free) men, 14 women, 9 boys, and 8 girls born on Saba, one free boy born in other parts of the West Indies, and one male enslaved African, for a total of 51 inhabitants living between 13 houses, including those built of thatch (NArC). Importantly, the 1848 census did not include thatch houses in the house count, as there is no explicit statement outlining their inclusion in the tally as there was in the 1861 census. Therefore, thatch houses were probably present at Middle Island in 1848, as otherwise the ratio of inhabitants per house between 1848 to 1861 would have substantially decreased despite an increase in population. The only houses in the “Saba style” present at Middle Island, which would have been counted in the 1848 census, would have been located atop stone house foundations. Those remaining at Middle Island are Houses 1, 2, 4, and 5, if indeed the latter was considered part of the village.

In 1865, two years after emancipation in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the population increased to 22 men, 28 women, 14 boys, and 6 girls, all born on Saba, for a total of 70 residents between 19 houses. The first Saba Catholic Baptismal Register (Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church, Saba) lists another census for the island in 1865, but this instance records 16 houses instead. The jump from an additional 19 residents and 3 to 6 houses (including thatch) in just four years is notable, and coincides with emancipation in 1863. These newly liberated Sabans were free to make conscious choices about where they could live, and several likely migrated to the village. Middle Island only had one enslaved Saban in 1861; the village did not have a social environment that harbored a legacy of owner-enslaved relations, which may have been attractive to those seeking to reject or distance themselves from former enslaved identities. No further village-specific population data is available after this time. It is unknown precisely when Middle Island was abandoned, but it probably occurred piecemeal during the first half of the twentieth century, based upon archaeological evidence, discussed in the following section.

There is a glaring gulf between the number of houses in the census records, which include those made of thatch, with the total found at the site from surface remains. This is almost certainly because the majority of houses at Middle Island by the 1860’s were made of wattle with thatch roofs. Conveniently though for the archaeologist, as the whole site is located on an incline between 15-25 degrees, house construction at Middle Island required extensive terracing to create habitable flat areas, which then provide indirect evidence of their locations. These areas are marked upon the site map.

Although Middle Island is less than 700m away in a straight line from Palmetto Point, it did not suffer many of the inclemencies that beset the village throughout the later stages of its existence. The trail that led to The Bottom was less arduous than the latter half that led from Middle Island to
Palmetto Point, evidenced by the tariff fees for the first and special house visits by Dr. John W. Kloppers drawn up by the Delegated Bench of Justice on Saba on 3 March 1864 (DNAr 1.05.13.901 #540.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First or special visit</td>
<td>f1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary ditto</td>
<td>f1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Crispeen, St. Johns, and Middle Island**

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<th></th>
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</thead>
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<td>First or special visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ordinary ditto</td>
<td>f1.50</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Peak, Windwardside, and Booby Hill**

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<tr>
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<td>f4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary ditto</td>
<td>f2</td>
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</table>

**Palmetto Point & Hells Gate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cost (florins)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>f7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary ditto</td>
<td>f4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Night visits double
Visits to a vessel clear of boat hire f6
Consultation with a midwife f6
A whole night’s attendance f6
Extracting teeth f2
Bleeding f2
Vaccinating f3

The difficulty in attaining medical attention was one of the mitigating factors regarding the authorities’ decision to evacuate and relocate residents of Palmetto Point in 1934. Residents of Middle Island also had access to a small well located just 21m west and downslope of House 2, in addition to the well at Wells Bay, guaranteeing them a more reliable supply of water than was available at Palmetto Point (Espersen 2013).

A deed to lands purchased by David Wright Hassell of The Bottom from David Wright Horton describes two named sections of Middle Island. The property concerned was named “The Hillside”, half of which was sold for 12.5 guilders. This property was bordered in the east by lands known as the “Estate’s Flat”, in the west and south by lands of William Simmons, and in the north by the land of Phoenix Hassell (C-Repertorium No. 67 vol 5, Department of Public Works, Saba). While the location of the “Estate’s Flat” is difficult to place with limited correlation points, it would be a remnant of the Dinzey Estate sugar plantation, and lend credence to oral history that Middle Island was one of the estate’s enslaved African villages.
Faunal remains

Faunal remains from Middle Island were analyzed by Jorissen (2014), who noted the significantly lower proportions of shell material, especially regarding *Fissurela nimbosa* and *Chiton sp.* in House 1, and high proportions of fish. This stands in stark contrast to Palmetto Point, where these two shellfish varieties composed the majority of the assemblage in the trash pit and from domestic units. It was also peculiar that both trash pits excavated at Middle Island contained few faunal remains. Faunal material from Trash Pit 2 included just 9 specimens, consisting of two cow molars (*Bos*), one goat tooth (*Caprinae*), and one pig molar (*Sus*), 3 unidentifiable fish bones, and one *Fissurela nimbosa*. These remains, and comparisons to other sites, are discussed in the following chapter.

Burial practices

The only readily determinable burials at Middle Island were at House 2, located just 4m west of the house, following the traditional Saban practice of burying one’s nuclear family close to their residence. This is a series of 9 graves, set along the length of a terrace. Two of them, graves 1 and 2, appear to be constructed as a vault, created by lining the grave cavity with tall, flat stones. This is clearly evidenced on the surface by the protrusion of these stones through the fill, which together form a shape that is broad at the shoulders, and narrows to the feet. This is similar to the graves of the ex-Gezaghebber and his wife, excavated by Haviser, Gilmore, and Gilmore at what is now the Breadline Plaza in Windwardside (Haviser 2015). An unmodified rock slightly taller than the rest is set at the top as a headstone. These two graves are aligned east to west, with the headstone facing east. The other seven graves consist of unmodified, more rounded stones aligned in diamond or oval forms on the surface, with no clear intent regarding directional alignment. Located between graves 1 and 2 was a large fragment of a smooth-ground granite headstone. A second fragment of this was found on the surface next to Trash Pit 2. There was no text or other evidence of modification on the headstone. The surface of Middle Island is scattered with naturally-deposited rock and extensive leaf litter, making it difficult to readily identify rock alignments that could be signifiers of a burial. Despite repeated efforts during pedestrian surveys to locate other grave markers at Middle Island, including by removing leaf litter, no convincing surface evidence has been found.

House 1

Despite the 70 residents living at Middle Island in 1865, only four house remains (three with foundations) were located at the site. House 1 is constructed onto a narrow terrace, leaving only 300cm to the edge of the downslope terrace to the west, and about 1m to the terrace east (behind) and upslope of the house. Only the house foundation remains, which was constructed of cut stone
and mortar, and measures 592cm northeast to southwest along the terrace, and 439cm northwest to southeast, with a small, 80cm x 88cm alcove protruding from the eastern corner of the structure, which may have been a kitchen stove. Approximately 16.40m south of House 1 is a circular, dry stone animal pen 880cm in diameter. There is no cistern in the immediate vicinity of House 1; it is roughly equidistant, however, between Cisterns 4 and 5.

Figure 84: The foundations of House 1, looking north.

Four 1x1 meter units were excavated by trowel within the house foundations, composing approximately half of the interior, and a 50cm wide trench was excavated by shovel along the outer, eastern foundation wall. The inner excavation units produced interesting assemblages that varied considerably between one another. There was no clear stratification of ceramics in the assemblage throughout the levels, however the quantity of artifacts dropped off substantially after Level 2, dropping to just a few artifacts in Level 4, to nothing in Level 5 and beyond. The assemblage is notable in that it contains coins, buttons, and marbles in quantities that were not seen in any other surface collection or excavation on Saba. In particular, the bulk of the aforementioned artifacts were found in Units 1 and 2, with only one coin from Unit 3, and nothing in Unit 4. There were also larger faunal assemblages in Units 1 and 2, consisting of numerous fish scales, small fish bones, and some shell fragments, described in detail later. In addition, small or narrow artifacts such as coins and beads were
found in quantities not seen elsewhere on the island. This deposition pattern is likely due to a combination of factors. The house foundation cut stone and mortar with a smooth, flat surface. As the artifacts were found up to 40cm below the level of the foundation, it is unlikely that the house had a dirt floor, but instead sat upon the foundation with wooden floorboards that were not tongue-and-groove. This would have created gaps allowing thin artifacts such as coins and buttons, and mobile artifacts such as marbles to be lost into these spaces, and deposited within the confines of the house foundation. The floor space above units 3 and 4 may have been occupied by household furniture that covered these gaps, thus resulting in a considerably smaller deposition of these artifacts. The non-faunal assemblage consisted of 452 artifacts, with the distribution outlined the figure below.

The composition of the assemblage is fairly proportional regarding ceramics, glass, and nails. The bulk of miscellaneous denominator consists of unidentifiable pieces of iron. Also notable are seven slate fragments, eight slate pencil fragments, two clay marbles and one glass marble, a fragment of mica, a fishing hook, three grinding stones, a hammer stone, six glass beads, one gunflint, and five Dutch coins. Whiteware varieties, numbering 73, comprised the bulk of the ceramic assemblage. This included varieties and different colours of transfer print ware, late hand painted polychrome wares, cut sponge wares, and later varieties of annular ware, representative of the mid to late nineteenth century. There were comparatively fewer examples of pearlware, numbering 15, and only four sherds of creamware. Three sherds of Chinese porcelain were also found, along with three sherds of a lead glazed coarse earthenware similar North Holland slipware, and two sherds of European coarse earthenware. These are curious in that they may indicate an occupation period at Middle Island much earlier than the
nineteenth century. They were found in the top two layers, which suggests that they could have been deposited by erosion from upper slopes after the house was dismantled and abandoned. The assemblage is too small for a reliable use of the mean ceramic date, but from a qualitative assessment, outliers aside, this ceramic assemblage is strongly representative of the whole nineteenth century, but more especially the mid to later period. The most common decoration on the ceramics was transfer print whiteware, at 18 sherds, followed by 15 sherds of spongeware varieties, and nine sherds of scalloped shell edge varieties. Expensive varieties were limited to one sherd of lustureware and Chinese porcelain, respectively.

The glass assemblage, consisting of 101 artifacts, featured many examples of readily datable material. Smaller, identifiable pieces include 2 two-piece mold sherds, one post-bottom mold base, one machine made sherd, two turn mold sherds. Two intact bottles were also found, consisting of an aqua glass, two-piece, tooled finish, round bottle, approximately 700ml in volume, with “Stafford’s Ink” as relief text. The finish was also intentionally folded into a single tip during manufacture, presumably to facilitate a clean pour. The tooled finish indicates a date after 1870. The second bottle was recovered standing upright from a depth of 35cm. It is an aqua, beveled corner, two-piece case bottle with “Hamburg” in relief text down the length of the vessel, indicating its origin in Hamburg, Germany, and likely containing spirits. The beveled corners indicate a date of manufacture after the 1860’s. Together, the glass assemblage suggests an occupation period from the mid nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.

The presence of slate sherds, slate pencils, and large ink bottle strongly indicate literate household members. There is no documentary evidence concerning the presence or absence of literacy at Middle Island, and unlike Palmetto Point, no school teacher was known to have frequented the village for instruction. Four coins were recovered from Level 2, and one from Level 3. The coins from Level 2 include two Dutch 3-cent pieces dated 1863 and 1875, a ½ cent piece dated 1873, and an illegible denomination copper alloy coin, 14mm in diameter, dated 1875. Unfortunately, the example from the third level is cut in half, and only “18”, indicating the nineteenth century, is visible for a date. It is 16mm in diameter, and composed of a copper alloy, which are identical characteristics of the Dutch 3-cent pieces recovered from Level 2.

The nail assemblage consists of 33 wrought nails, 1 handmade head cut nail, 16 machine made head cut nails, one wire nail, and 21 unidentifiable nails that are either cut or wrought. The presence of four different nail varieties suggest that the house went through several stages of repair during the nineteenth century, and given the proportional distribution of wrought to cut nails throughout the excavation levels, it is likely that wrought nails were saved and reused during renovation and reconstruction.
A variety of buttons were recovered, 11 in total, consisting of 6 porcelain buttons, one single-hole bone disk, one 17mm brass button, 2 copper alloy buttons, and one turtle shell button, 19mm in diameter. The porcelain buttons are likely representative of three shirt buttons, 11mm in diameter, one undergarment button 9mm in diameter, and perhaps one jacket button, 16mm in diameter (Lindbergh 1999). The porcelain buttons have a TPQ of 1840’s, and are undecorated except for the largest example, which features the hobnail decoration, characterized by raised dots along the rim (Lindbergh 1999:52). The bone disk was probably an undergarment button, and the copper alloy buttons were used to fasten suspenders and trousers (Lindbergh 1999). Although copper alloy fasteners had been in use since 1787, the text on one button, “BEST RING EDGE”, was manufactured in the first decade of the twentieth century. A thimble was recovered from Level 2 of Unit 1. Tailoring is known throughout Saba’s oral history and the documentary record as a woman’s profession; in particular, all historical photographs of women stitching Saba lace viewed by the author take place in the vicinity of a house; either just outside a house, upon the balcony, or within the house. Together, the thimble and its context strongly indicate a direct association with women.

Two piles of stone were located just south of House 1, which given their location and organization, are very likely graves. The first pile measures 224cm east to west and approximately 114cm north to south, while the second measures 230cm east to west, and about 107cm north to south. Although the piles are aligned to potentially face east, there is no stone clearly designated as a headstone on either end, and the stones are somewhat haphazardly piled upon each above the ground rather than set into the ground as a single layer as seen with the graves at House 2. Their positioning relative to House 1 fits the Saba tradition of family yard burials.

Figure 86: Southernmost suspected grave associated with House 1, facing south.
House 3

House 3 is evidenced by a cobblestone floor with a small, attached cobbled porch situated just 200cm south of Cistern 1 upon a narrow band of flat terrain created by the same terrace. The cobbled area measures 420cm north to south, and 220cm east to west, with a cobbled entrance jutting from the middle-north face 100cm x 130cm. The location for the house is somewhat unfavourable as it was constructed directly on top of the dry stone terrace itself, rather than situated upon natural ground shored up or supported by a terrace. This would have made it difficult to construct a stable stone and mortar foundation for a house. As there is also no surface evidence to suggest a dry stone foundation surrounding the cobbled floor, and given the small dimensions of the feature, it is likely that a wattle house with a thatch roof was constructed over top instead.

The artifact assemblage from House 3 was small compared to that of House 1. Units 1 and 2 were located flush against the southern edge of the cobblestone floor, and were the only units to harbor artifacts. Nothing was recovered from units 3 and 4, which comprised the southern interior of the floor, and flush to units 1 and 2. Units depth did not proceed past Level 2, as the integrity of the terrace was becoming compromised. As well, by Level 2 the layer was composed entirely of backfilled terrace stones, creating multiple gaps between them, and thus many artifacts that would otherwise be found within the layer instead fell between the cracks. Due to the lack of soil and preponderance of rock fill, no postholes were visible.

Figure 87: Both dry stone piles suspected to be graves, with House 1 in the background, looking north.
The ceramic assemblage from both units consisted of nineteenth century sherds, with more bias towards the mid nineteenth century. Four sherds of a red bodied coarse earthenware were also recovered from Level 2, probably the same vessel, and likely Amerindian. A tiny perfume bottle, just 50mm in height, was recovered from the same layer. Only five wrought nails were recovered from the units, which suggests that a wattle structure surrounded the cobble floor, with posts set into the terrace rock fill.

The series of slavery laws passed in 1823 outlined previously clearly state that enslaved African houses were forbidden to have boarded partitions or a boarded floor. As a consequence, these houses must have been single room structures with either marl, dirt, or cobblestone flooring. The censuses for 1848 shows one enslaved man and two enslaved boys in the village, followed in 1861 by one enslaved man. House 3 fits the legal criteria for an enslaved African domestic structure, and is situated upon the rock foundations of a terrace, which created a thin section of platform that extends downslope no further than one meter from the house to the terrace edge, and three meters back from the house to a 20 to 30 degree slope. In addition, its location just 190cm southwest of Cistern 1 strongly suggests that the structure, adjoining land, and the cistern were owned by the same individual. Given the high cost associated with cistern construction, the costs incurred with purchase, the potential income from sale, and the social capital available through ownership where the cisterns in the village were not capable of supporting the water requirements of the inhabitants (Espersen 2013), it is highly likely that the person that inhabited House 3 did not own the cistern. Although there is a good possibility that House 3 is an enslaved African house, this cannot be a definite assertion without further evidence.

Figure 88: Middle Island, House 3, looking south.
House 2

House 2 is the largest structure at Middle Island, which composes part of what may have been considered an estate that includes an animal pen, at least nine stone-lined, oval graves adjacent to the east face of the house, and two large domed cisterns. The foundations appear to be a blend of a dry stones to along the north and western faces, and well cut stone and mortar along the east and southern walls. Surprisingly, few artifacts were recovered from four 1x1m units placed within the foundations of House 2 compared to House 1; the majority consisted of red brick fragments and a small proportion of wrought and cut nails. This absence can be attributed to several factors. The soil within the foundations may have been removed when the cut stone foundation was laid down, thereby destroying evidence of previous assemblages, and the house resting atop the foundation would have had a tongue-and-groove floor which would have minimized or eliminated cracks through which artifacts within the house could fall through to be deposited beneath.

The ceramic assemblage amounts to just 19 sherds, composed of one sherd of creamware, one sherd of Imari porcelain, two sherds of pearlware, one sherd of annular pearlware, five sherds of cut sponge whiteware, one sherd of rococo shell edge ware, unscalloped shell edge ware, two sherds of unidentifiable whiteware, and two sherds of Bristol glaze stoneware. These ceramics suggest a nineteenth century occupation, with the Imari and rococo edge wares as outliers, possibly from a previous occupation. This range is also supported by the presence of a four-hole porcelain button, and
the nail assemblage, of which a total of 31 were recovered, consisting of 18 wrought nails, 6 cut nails, 4 wire nails, and 3 that were unidentifiable. Beyond these artifacts, few others in the assemblage are datable. A 2x1 unit was excavated approximately 2m north of Cistern 3 in light of the absence of artifacts recovered within House 2. These two units yielded a considerably larger assemblage, with a total of 333 artifacts, composed of 135 ceramics, 35 glass sherds, 53 metal artifacts, 51 nails, 9 pipe pieces, 8 shell fragments, 19 red brick fragments, 14 coral fragments, and some pieces of charcoal that were kept for samples. The ceramic assemblage consists primarily of equal proportions of pearlware and whiteware varieties, with the whiteware dating from the mid nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Ceramic decoration consisted primarily of transfer print varieties, numbering 31 sherds, 17 annular ware sherds, and 13 sherds of sponge varieties. Expensive varieties, such as lustureware and Chinese porcelain only accounted for one sherd each.

Figure 90: Middle Island, House 2, looking north from the southwest corner. Note the cut stone and mortar foundation to the right behind the young mahogany trees, and the dry stone foundation along the length of the scale rod on the left. The walls of the animal pen are visible just north of the foundation. The graves are located beyond the photo, just 4m west of the scale rod.

Unfortunately, as is the common case on Saba, no preserved stratigraphy was present, as scratch blue white stoneware and early creamware sherds were found in layers above cut sponge whiteware. The nail assemblage amounts to 51, including 31 wrought nails, 4 cut nails, 1 wire nail, and 15 unidentifiable nails. The preponderance of wrought nails relative to other varieties suggests a construction period in this general area that dates to the early nineteenth century or prior.
House 2 graves

At least six graves are located approximately 4m west House 2, along the edge of the terrace which supports the flat ground upon which the house, two cisterns, and graves are situated. The dimensions of each, relative to their alignment are, listed below.

Table 6: SB 026, House 2, Grave Dimensions

<table>
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<th>Grave</th>
<th>E-W (cm)</th>
<th>N-S (cm)</th>
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<td>135</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grave 2</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grave 3</td>
<td>242</td>
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<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grave 8</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graves 1, 2, and 6 consist of andesite cobbles laid out in a pattern consisting of a stone for the head, two stones approximately the same size as the head-stone set side by side below its mid-point, similar to the shoulder flare seen in coffins, and an inconsistent number of similarly sized stones extending below the shoulder down to the feet. The dimensions of the graves are probably commensurate with the size of the corresponding interred individual. Two more possible graves, designated as 7 and 8, are located at the foot of Graves 3 and 4, respectively, marked in the same fashion. Graves 3, 4, and 5 are more defined than the rest. These are marked by long, flat slabs of andesite that are set vertically into the ground, with their tops protruding above the surface, giving sharp definition along the length of the interred individual. Notably, a large fragment of a polished, grey granite gravestone was located...
between Graves 3 and 4; a second fragment was found adjacent to Trash Pit 2. It had a rounded top and a flat base, but lacked any incised text. The gravestone had apparently been intended as a marker for a new or existing grave at the site, but never set.

**2m x 3m shallow trench**

A 2x3 meter shallow trench was excavated by shovel approximately 2m south of Cistern 5 on a large, flat area created by a series of terraces above and below. It was thought that this would be an ideal location for a thatch hut. Unfortunately, no postholes were found. A small assemblage of artifacts was recovered, notably an intact musket barrel found lying parallel to the ground at the bottom of Level 2 (10cm – 20cm), in the northwest corner of the unit. It measured 635mm in length, with a tip width of 22mm. The bore diameter could not be ascertained due to concretions surrounding the entirety of the barrel. The ceramic assemblage included eight sherds of creamware, five sherds of pearlware, one sherd of early hand painted pearlware, one sherd of rococo shell edge ware, one cabled annular creamware, one sherd of transfer print Chinese scene whiteware, one late hand painted whiteware, three unidentifiable stoneware sherds, one sherd of European coarse earthenware, and five sherds of a burnished, likely Amerindian vessel. Pre-Columbian outliers aside, together this ceramic assemblage is representative of the late eighteenth to nineteenth century, in line with the documented settlement period of the site. The glass assemblage featured no datable or noteworthy examples.
Trash Pit 1

Trash Pit 1, in a similar vein to its second namesake, was constructed into a pre-existing, short dry stone terrace along the middle southern extremity of SB 026. Rocks were removed from the terrace to form a hollow for rubbish, consisting mostly of glass bottles. The excavated area measures approximately 2x3 meters, and work proceeded by following the limits of the trash pit feature, as there was no stratigraphy apparent in the deposit. The depth of the trash pit feature varied between 80cm at the south end, to just 30cm in the west and north extents. The top 20cm of soil in the eastern half of the unit consisted of an ashen, black loam interspersed with charcoal and large quantities of burned coral, composing the remains of quicklime production. The northeastern 1x1m unit yielded 153
burned coral fragments from this layer, for an average count of 459 fragments in the aforementioned area. There were no sherds of melted or heat-stressed glass recovered from the pit, thus this top layer probably represents the discarded contents of kitchen ovens rather than from fires in the pit itself.

By and large, the majority of artifacts recovered are from glass bottles, predominately green case bottles. The composition is outlined in the figure below. The 12 artifacts referenced are metal, and the two counts of one represent the porcelain button and a red brick fragment.

The mean ceramic date for the namesake assemblage is 1842. The glass assemblage, however, is large enough to provide a better indication for dating, given the short span between their production and deposition compared to ceramics. A qualitative assessment of the glass assemblage places it between the mid nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

Regarding the ceramic assemblage, mid nineteenth century varieties of whiteware predominate, especially later blue-banded annular ware, late hand painted polychrome floral wares, cut sponge wares, and later varieties of transfer print ware. There was a very notable lack of coarse earthenware in the ceramic assemblage, comprising only 13 sherds, 10 of which were from a single brown lead-glaze, orange bodied large bowl. Two sherds were from a burnished, tan-bodied vessel, probably a jug, with a “VVVV” pattern incised horizontally around the shoulder. This same ceramic type was found at Trash Pit 2, numbering 16 sherds with a probable MNI of 1, and 37 sherds of an identical vessel were recovered at SB 036 in Level 2 (20cm – 40cm), an early nineteenth century context with a MCD of 1827. Its origin of manufacture has not been determined.
While there were a variety of decorative styles present in the assemblage, these were mainly confined to transfer print whiteware, annular varieties on whiteware, sponge varieties, and late hand painted floral designs on whiteware.

The glass assemblage is the second largest the author has amassed on the island from a single feature, next to Trash Pit 2 and Middle Island. It likely represents a small fraction of the actual alcohol consumption that took place at the site, as this refuse pit is located adjacent to the edge of a steep drop that leads down to the gut that separates Middle Island from Cow Pasture. Further east, approximately 40 meters, the site ends abruptly in a cliff that drops 100 meters down to the sea. It would have been easier, and perhaps more practical, to dispose of intact or broken glass over these edges rather than in a pit. In addition, as no rocks were placed on top of the assemblage to conceal their presence, the glass deposited at Trash Pit 1 was publicly visible, and thus indicative of alcohol consumption that was not done in secret, and without a general regard to conceal evidence. A potpourri of alcohol was consumed based upon the assemblage, including Bordeaux Red Wine by Julien Médoc, P.F. Heering Cherry Liqueur from Denmark, and large quantities of Dutch gins. Wine was also purchased by the demijean, evidenced by 47 sherds. A French olive oil bottle seal was found as well, by James Plaignol of Marseille. A comparatively small number of artifacts were recovered outside of ceramics, glass, and burnt coral. These included one 125mm diameter lead musket ball, three fragments of a cast iron pot, a .22 magnum rimfire bullet casing, and a large iron hinge.
Trash Pit 1 was not located near Houses 1, 2, or 3, but given the proximity to the long, flat terraces on the western extents of the site, this may be an assemblage associated with thatch houses in this area. The large quantity of glass recovered between a hollow in a terrace fits a deposition pattern seen across Saba. At Behind-the-Ridge, SB 030, a considerable assemblage of artifacts, including a large collection of glass and marine faunal remains, was recovered by SABARC from the surface after a Caterpillar excavator pulled away some large rocks from a terrace during the construction of a new house. Trash Pit 2 at Middle Island is composed of over 75% glass, while the trash pit at Palmetto Point contains a similar proportion.

Trash Pit 2

Trash Pit 2 is actually associated with House 2, situated in the northwest of a terrace approximately 4m equidistant from the house and the closest grave maker. Similar to Trash Pit 1, this pit was created by removing rocks from a pre-existing terrace to create a hollow to contain refuse, consisting largely of discarded liquor bottles. The excavation unit for Trash Pit 2 followed the feature extents along all faces except the south, where a limit was delineated arbitrarily.
This resulted in a unit that measured 260cm in length, 100cm wide, and an average of 60cm depth. There was no stratigraphy visible in the deposit, but the artifact concentration in the unit was so thick that in the upper 50cm that there was almost no soil present, and thus to avoid damaging artifacts with the trowel within this level, artifacts were instead all removed by hand. Some ceramics recovered within Trash Pit 2, such as large fragments of a yellowware bowl and a late annular ware bowl, had matching vessel fragments recovered from the surface between graves 1 and 2, approximately 8m south.

The MCD for Trash Pit 2 is 1857, fifteen years later than Trash Pit 1. The glass assemblage suggests a date between the early nineteenth to the early twentieth century, no later than 1930. However, the glass assemblage is most strongly represented from around 1850 to the early twentieth century. Glass comprised approximately 87.6% of the total assemblage, with a minority of ceramics at 11.7%, and a comparatively negligible number of other artifact types such as red and Ijssel brick fragments, nine undecorated clay pipe stem fragments, one cut nail, and some unidentifiable fragments of metal. These latter artifacts did not occur in sufficient quantities to provide temporal data save for the cut nail, which is indicative of the nineteenth century. Of some interest are six pieces of a copper alloy round, perforated sheet which may be the remains of a skimmer used in sugar boiling. A 29mm diameter lead disk was also recovered, perforated through the middle, with a second attempted perforation nearby which extends halfway into the disk. Its use is uncertain, perhaps it was used as a fishing weight.
Known types of alcohol present in the bottle assemblage include cognac, cherry liqueur, wine and gin. The variety of glass vessel types present in Trash Pit 2 is mostly limited to round bottles and case bottles. However, the near-even proportion of the two present in this unit differs significantly from that of Trash Pit 1, where there are 776 round bottles to 2472 case bottles, or a ratio of approximately 1:3. This is indicative of a preference for strong spirits such as gin over wine and liqueurs by those responsible for the Trash Pit 1 assemblage, compared to more preference for variety by the inhabitants of House 2. The location of Trash Pit 2 is auspicious. It was a rubbish pit primarily for discarded alcohol bottles located in the front of the house, and adjacent to the family graveyard, in open view. The bottles do not appear to have been (often) reused for water bottles as three whole bottles were recovered from the pit, including a whole second-generation P.F. Heering cherry liqueur bottle. This is very revealing about the social acceptance of alcohol and alcohol consumption at Middle Island, as it was not located in a hidden or concealed place, least of most not in the back of the house. House 2 is also located close to the edge of the gut which separates Middle Island from Cow Pasture, and the trailhead to the latter begins beside Cisterns 2 and 3. The inhabitants probably refrained from discarding glass over the edge down into the gut as sherds would inevitably come to rest upon the trail, and opted instead for what became Trash Pit 2.
Trash Pit 3

This area was located by the author well after the end of excavations at SB 026. While assemblage was not excavated, it still provides some comparative data. Trash Pit 3 is a hollow formed by removing stones from the top of the dry stone wall that extends downslope as an extension of the southern wall of an upslope animal pen. It appears that bottles were deposited in the hollow and subsequently covered with rocks in order to hide their presence. Approximately 20kg of glass was observed within Trash Pit 3, mostly straight-sided dip moulded round green glass bottles and curved-bottom case bottles, both with free-blown and applied tooled finishes. This assemblage appears to date from the late eighteenth century to around 1860.

House 4

House 4 is located on a terrace directly below House 1, and consists of a dry stone foundation measuring approximately 370cm east to west, and 420cm north to south. It is perched flush to the edge of the lowest terrace in the northern half of Middle Island. Two sherds of tin enamel ware were and one sherd of late hand painted whiteware were noted on the surface. The remains of what is probably a grave were found 250 north of the foundation, measuring approximately 180cm north to
south, and about 60cm east to west. The head-stone is placed in the northern end of the grave, thus
aligning the interred individual to face south.

**Figure 99: Middle Island, House 4, probable grave.**

**House 5**

House 5 consists of a short, tall terrace, upon which rests a small dry stone foundation. Its
location was betrayed late into this research by a fruit-laden tangerine tree visible from House 4, a
considerable distance away. House 5 is actually situated north of the Middle Island gut, and about
10m north again of the Wells Bay road. The foundations are approximately 80cm wide, measuring
350cm east to west, and 325cm north to south. There was apparent care taken to ensure that a flat
and straight inside edge was created during the placement of rocks for the foundation. There is a large
rock, approximately 90cm x 80cm x 70cm, which rests upon a smaller rock, which together form the
entire east wall, and project over top of the foundation. The north and south dry stone walls are braced
by the boulder, and terminate behind it as seen in Figure 100 below. This fits the pattern of similar
structures seen at Spring Bay, Spring Bay Flat, and Hell’s Gate. The dry stone terrace is located about
8m west of the foundation, and averages about 2m in height. Three tangerine trees were noted in the
immediate area; one just below the terrace, and two within the house foundations. The fruit has a
thick rind, and is both sweet and tart. There are few other tangerine trees known on the island. There
is a narrow strip of flat land immediately north of the foundation, somewhat clear of rocks and
boulders, which may have been used for subsistence agriculture. The rest of the surrounding land is quite steep, usually greater than 45 degrees in slope, strewn with boulders, and showing signs of frequent erosion, making it unsuitable for agriculture. There were no other terraces noted in this area. Two sherds of whiteware were noted below the southern wall of the house foundation. Notably, a very smooth, flat-faced grinding stone was found beside the house foundation.

Figure 100: Middle Island, House 5, view of the house foundation boulder, facing west.

Figure 101: Flat-faced, smooth grinding stone near the foundations of House 5.
Other burials at Middle Island

A cluster of five dry stone outline graves are found beginning about 600cm southwest of Cistern 5. They are aligned to face east, and there are two pairs situated closely to one another, and situated on a terrace above the fifth burial, suggesting that at least both members of each pair shared a family relationship. However, these burials are not associated with any visible house foundations; rather, these burials are located in an area that almost certainly hosted a series of thatch houses, as the terraces found throughout this lower area created the only available stretches of flat land for house construction. However, given the population increase due to an influx of free African descent Sabans from 1848 to 1865, the five graves found in this area does not reflect the number of residents that would have been found in this area; indeed, only a total of 17 graves were located throughout the entirety of archaeological work at the site. Of course, there are probably other graves that have yet to be located, either because they were missed during survey, or their markers have been buried due to erosion, root activity, and leaf litter, or destroyed over time. Nonetheless, the survey was quite extensive, and it appears that, especially for this part of Middle Island that hosted the thatch houses, not all inhabitants were observing Saban house-yard burial traditions. This may reflect an observance of other burial practices, such as those employed by enslaved Africans, or simply that individuals were buried according to a particular tradition without the use of markers. Further work is needed in this area to determine the reasons.

Middle Island in context

Middle Island provided a wealth of comparative data, both within the site itself, and in relation to others across Saba. By the nineteenth century the site was composed of both white and African-descent households, (though more the latter), which creates difficulties in correlating particular assemblages to island-specific notions of race, since the only definitive correlation of a household to a structure were the Beals in House 2. There was only one enslaved African known to have lived at Middle Island prior to 1863, which sets Middle Island apart from Palmetto Point. Relative levels of class, though, can be ascertained through both material record contexts and house architecture. Alcohol consumption was prevalent at Middle Island throughout the nineteenth century, as it was at Palmetto Point, but curiously less so with the SB 036 trash pit. In certain households, such as House 2, the residents even disposed of their empty bottles in the front of their house; however, this was viewed by others, they did not shy away from alcohol consumption and public evidence thereof. This contrasts with alcohol bottle deposition patterns in other parts of Saba, wherein they are hidden from overt view, such as between large stones in walls at SB 026 (Trash Pit 3) and SB 030, and the privy pit of SB 036. The preference for transfer print wares across assemblages at Middle Island is clear, and
particularly the relative lack of coarse earthenwares, especially non-European coarse earthenware, which could be either Afro-Caribbean or Amerindian in origin. Their absence is conspicuous given the prevalence of free African-descent families at Middle Island, and this may very well represent a conscious association of Afro-Caribbean wares with slavery. Thus denying or limiting their household use was a means of disassociating oneself from an identity as a slave. This will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Other relevant sites

**SB 039: Upper Hell’s Gate animal shelter**

The site SB 039 was found by the author in 2013, and consists of a series of low, dry stone terraces, and an intact shelter identical to Structure A at Spring Bay Flat. It is located just 10m west of the end of the Upper Hell’s Gate road, accessible from the beginning of the Sandy Cruz hiking trail. Interestingly, it is still in use, probably as a shelter for livestock. Excavation within the structure would have been difficult given the abundance of wasp nests within and around it. It consists of two dry stone walls, each projecting 220cm from the eastern face of a boulder, 180cm high, the walls 40cm thick at the base, and separated by 80cm. Therefore, the interior of the structure measures 180cm tall, 220cm long, and 80cm wide. The opening is oriented west, and the top is covered by a sheet of galvanized tin, supported by several rocks placed on top as weights. No artifacts were noted on the surface, or in the surrounding area. Small dry stone terraces were visible west of the structure, which may be remnants of divides used in a pasture ground. In this case, the structure was likely used as an animal shelter in former times.
SB 022: Little Rendezvous

The Rendezvous (pronounced as “Randy-hoo” by Sabans) is a descriptive name given to this region dating back to the seventeenth century, as a defensible and centralized area for residents of The Bottom, St. John’s, and Windwardside to fall back upon if the island came under threat of land invasion (Johnson 2014). It has since been used as an agricultural site up to the twentieth century, with some areas still tended by individuals and the Ecolodge, mostly to grow bananas. While the site itself is not central to this research, a photo provided by Will Johnson (personal communication, 2014), shows Ulric Hassell at the Rendezvous tending to a calf in the 1960’s, and features a twin-walled dry stone structure built into a dry stone terrace. The second photo shows a boy with a cow, with the same structure in the background. A hewn, square wooden beam is planted along the inside edge of one of the walls as support, and a pile of branches, logs, and hewn lumber are laid between the walls to serve as a roof. Surveys of the Rendezvous so far have not turned up evidence of this structure from the photograph, or anything similar. Regardless, the photo demonstrates that this style of structure served as livestock shelters, but similar structures at Spring Bay Flat and Spring Bay, discussed later, also show that they were used as housing for enslaved Africans.
Figure 106, above: Ulric Hassell and a calf, showing the dry stone shelter incorporated into the wall. Photo courtesy of Will Johnson.

Figure 107, below: Saban boy and cow, showing the dry stone shelter in the background. Photo courtesy of Will Johnson.
**SB 050: Thais Hill trash pit**

This site was found by the author in 2015 on the eastern flank of Thais Hill near St. John’s, and consists of a scattered deposit of early to mid-twentieth century glass bottles around several large boulders. Notably, the bottles consist of a variety of sizes, from less than 250ml to well over 1000ml. Repeatedly carrying water in a series of small bottles out to work would be impractical, and therefore this assemblage is more indicative of alcohol consumption than their re-use and subsequent deposition as water bottles. The bottles were not collected, and the site was not excavated. The majority of the bottles are located on the upslope end of the boulders, which would have provided an excellent, sheltered location to discretely consume alcohol out of view from the village of St. John’s.

**SB 025: Cow Pasture village cistern**

The region known as Cow Pasture is located on a tract of land between The Ladder and Middle Island, and formed a part of the Dinzez plantation. At least four houses are found in the village (Havisser 1985), which dates from the nineteenth to mid twentieth century. While the site has not been excavated to date, the author has frequented the site on several occasions. The village site identified by Havisser has three cisterns, one of which had not collapsed. At the bottom this cistern, five intact machine made glass bottles were found, dating from the early to mid twentieth century. These were originally alcohol bottles, mostly for gin. Their intact condition and context at the bottom of the cistern demonstrates their reuse as water bottles.

**Closing Remarks**

The results of excavations outlined in this chapter have provided a considerable wealth of archaeological data across a range of temporal, spatial, and social contexts. In particular, the archaeological record has highlighted a spectrum of material vectors through which ideologies of class, race, and gender within Saba be expressed. Those vectors analyzed in depth include spatial distribution of settlements across Saba, spatial distribution of buildings on plantations, domestic architecture, diet, burial practices, cistern ownership, livestock ownership, ownership of enslaved Africans, and among some elements of material culture such as ceramics, alcohol bottles, and domestic furniture. The following chapter will interpret the archaeological data derived from sites presented in Chapters 5 and 6, together with relevant data from the documentary and oral history records, and contextualize them within local and regional levels.