



**AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY NEW JERSEY AND BEYOND:  
A QUICK SUMMARY AND SOME RESOURCES**

**Take Away:**

**Archaeology can contribute to the development of the Sourland African-American Museum by researching sites associated with the history of African-Americans on the Mountain. This research could form part of the programming of the Museum.**

**Quick Summary:**

Since the late 1960's, archaeology has been used to learn about the African-American past. Archaeology studies the past by using the physical evidence people have left behind: their tools, their houses, their settlements, their landscapes and even their burial grounds. Archaeology gives a different, but complementary, perspective on the past from documentary history. It is particularly useful for studying "invisible" people who do not figure much in historical documents. This is particularly true of African-Americans, both free and enslaved.

African-American Archaeology has thrown light on many aspects of the history of African-Americans. Among these are:

1. The identification of African cultural and spiritual practices among enslaved Africans in America. These studies have shown how African identities were maintained despite pressures to abandon them. Examples include distinctive clusters of artifacts found under floors in slave contexts in Annapolis and elsewhere.
2. The identification of African cultural characteristics in the layout and construction techniques of buildings and communities. One example of this is the recognition of the "shotgun" house of the American South as a derivation of West African and Caribbean house types.
3. Demography and Forensics. The best-known example of this is the excavation and analysis of the remains of hundreds of individuals at the African Burial Ground in Manhattan. This has provided a huge body of information on the reality of life for Africans in Colonial New York as

revealed by the study of the remains of the people, of the artifacts buried with them, and the burial rites which they were given.

4. The lives of free African-Americans and their creation of a distinctive culture within wider American society.

#### **Some Resources:**

##### Websites

*The African Diaspora Archaeology Network* <http://www.diaspora.illinois.edu/>. This site has a wide range of resources for African-American archaeology, and has back issues of newsletters

##### Peer-reviewed Journal

The *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage* (Volume 1 2012 and onwards) is the source for reports and papers on scholarly research in African-American archaeology <http://tandfonline.com/toc/yjaf20/current>:

##### Books (a small selection)

*Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America 1650-1800*. Smithsonian Books 1992.

Leland Ferguson

Strongly argues that slaves created a distinct identity that was independent of the European/American culture that surrounded and sought to dominate them.

*The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture*

Patricia Samford

William and Mary Quarterly Vol. 53, No. 1, Material Culture in Early America (Jan., 1996), pp. 87-114

Theresa Singleton (ed.)

*"I, Too Am America": Archaeological Studies of African-American Life*. University Press of Virginia 1999.

15 papers on a number of different aspects of African-American Archaeology

*The New York African Burial Ground: Unearthing the African Presence in New York*. Howard University Press and the U.S. General Services Administration 2009.

A well-illustrated summary of the archaeological discoveries at the African Burial Ground National Historic Landmark.

##### New Jersey

Giles Wright

*Afro-Americans in New Jersey: A Short History.* New Jersey Historical Commission  
This book surveys the long Afro-American past in New Jersey, from the colonial era to the late 20th century. Topics include the black migrations from the south, slavery and abolition, and the civil rights movement.

***The Beverwyck Site:*** an extensively excavated 18<sup>th</sup> century plantation in Morris County with many slaves

McCormick Taylor

*Archaeological Investigations at the Beverwyck Site 28Mr256. Route 46 and Beverwyck Road. Parsippany-Troy Hills. Morris County New Jersey.* On file at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Trenton.

These excavations identified a slave quarter building 20 x 25 feet with slave shackles buried in the floor, together with caches of artifacts in the African *nkisi* tradition

***Timbuctoo:*** An African-American community in Westhampton Township, Burlington County, New Jersey. Founded about 1820, and the site of the 1860 Battle of Pine Swamp when armed residents drive off a party of slave catchers. There is an ongoing historical and archaeological project here.

Christopher Barton & Patricia Markert

*Collaborative Archaeology, Oral History, and Social Memory at Timbuctoo, New Jersey.* Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage Vol 1, Issue 1 2012, 79-102 (Published online: 18 Jul 2013).

This article discusses ongoing research concerning the African-American community of Timbuctoo in Burlington County, New Jersey. Through the course of this work, a group of community descendants, Temple University archaeologists and vested community members utilize a collaborative approach to the history and archaeology of the town. Along with analysis of archaeological and written sources, researchers interviewed former residents and community descendants in an effort to better contextualize the past. Joining a growing movement of community-based archaeology projects, this work seeks through collaboration to complicate histories and interpretations of Timbuctoo. This collaborative approach seeks to better understand the past of Timbuctoo and to facilitate discourse on the constructions of race, class, and power in the present.

### Sourland Mountain

Richard Hunter

*The Demise of Traditional Pottery Manufacturing on Sourland Mountain, New Jersey, During the Industrial Revolution.* In *Domestic Pottery of the Northeastern United States, 1625-1850.* Academic Press 1985, 229-248.

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