

**Proposal for the Associated Colleges of the South
Teaching with Technology Fellowship, Summer 2006**

Title: Integrating Historical Archaeology into the Curriculum: material culture at the Ames Plantation
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1. Background:

Encompassing more than 18,650 contiguous acres in west Tennessee, Ames Plantation provides a unique setting for multidisciplinary research in both the social and natural sciences. Located about 50 miles east of Rhodes College, Ames Plantation offers a wealth of opportunities for field schools and off-campus experiences. In particular, the research and educational resources available at Ames Plantation are well suited for advancing programs in Archaeology, History, African-American Studies, Human and Wildlife Ecology, Cultural Geography, and GIS.

Settlement of the area that now belongs to the Ames Plantation Foundation (a non-profit organization with an educational mission) began about 1820 when homesteads were established on the North Fork of the Wolf River. Settlement was rapid, particularly during the 1830's and 40's. The population of Fayette County increased dramatically from around 800 in 1825 to 8,652 in 1830, and 21,501 in 1840. Dozens of plantations were established on thousands of acres of newly cleared land. The principal cash crop was cotton, dependent on slave labor. As a result, the African-American population of the area constituted two third of the total population (Allen 1999:12). The cotton plantation based economy thrived from the 1830's until the Civil War. After the Civil War much of the old plantation lands were shifted to the share-crop and tenant arrangement of farming. This practice continued throughout the remainder of the 19th Century. In 1901, Hobart Ames, a wealthy industrialist from North Easton, Massachusetts, began acquiring property in Fayette and Hardeman counties. From his base at the restored Cedar Grove Manor House, Ames operated his "Plantation" as a hunting preserve, livestock operation, and cotton farm until his death in April 1945 when the property passed to his widow, Mrs. Julia Colony Ames. Today, the Ames Plantation Foundation is a working agricultural and forestry complex privately owned and operated in accordance with the will of the late Julia C. Ames.

As part of the foundation's educational mission, the Cultural Resource Manager of the site, Mr. Jamie Evans (an experienced archaeologist), has been in conversation with several faculty members at Rhodes to begin planning specific field school opportunities that will be available for undergraduate students. With more than 20 historic plantation sites (in ruins with few visible standing structures), and several prehistoric Native American sites on the property, our goal is to establish a fully operational field school by 2007. During the summer of 2006, I am proposing to conduct a survey of one plantation site and establish a richly illustrated website that will provide an overview of the site for students and faculty at Rhodes and other ACS institutions.

2. Description:

During the funding period, I am proposing to develop a photographic (virtual) database of the surface artifacts at one of the 19th century plantation sites at Ames, the Fanny Dickens Plantation. The Archaeology Program at Rhodes hopes to conduct excavations at this plantation during the first three field school seasons, beginning in 2007. Thus, this photographic survey will be integrated into a website that can be used as a launching point for faculty and students who are interested in historic archaeology and plantation life, and the survey will serve as the initial database for the planned excavations. Since many of the original antebellum agricultural complexes were preserved relatively intact after the individual properties were consolidated by Hobart Ames in the early 1900s, this photographic survey will examine all extant building and other material culture remains associated with this plantation (the big house, slave cabins, root cellars, out buildings, church sites, cemeteries, etc.). Through the efforts of Mr. Evans, a firm foundation has already been established in the collection and indexing of archival documents and maps. Utilizing archival records in the form of land grants and deeds, a complete land ownership record has

been established at Ames Plantation (Evans 2000), thus the location of this plantation is known. In addition, a GIS database of land plat maps generated from deeds has been developed. Therefore, with the assistance of Mr. Evans, I will be able to conduct a photographic survey in which I will locate and record the relevant historic remains at this plantation, plot these on the land plat map, and integrate this material into a well notated website.

3. Timeline:

During the first week of June, I will conduct a basic archaeological survey of the Fanny Dickens Plantation and record all relevant material culture remains with photographs, plotting these on the existing map of the site using Global Positioning Systems (GPS) applications. Throughout most of June and July I will be working with three undergraduate students in the Rhodes Institute for Regional Studies examining the historic records related to this plantation. In early August I will complete a website that contains the annotated photographs, relevant historic documents, and plot maps of this site, along with relevant information about the ways this material can be used in preexisting and new undergraduate courses.

4. Technology:

The key technological components of the project are a GPS system and relevant software, a computer, website design software, server space, a scanner, and a high-quality digital camera.

5. Other Support:

An adequate GPS system and software are available for loan from the Rhodes College GIS program. I have conducted similar surveys in Israel and Cyprus, thus I have the training necessary to initiate the project. Rhodes has supplied me with a laptop computer that will facilitate the on-site data entry, as well as the website design. Adequate website design software and server space is available from the IT department at the college. Some assistance from the three students who are studying in the Rhodes Institute for Regional Studies is also anticipated with regard to the photographic survey and website design. A high-quality digital camera will be purchased for this project with part of the ACS Teaching with Technology Fellowship funds.

6. Learning Outcomes:

Integrating archaeology and material culture studies into the classroom is a valuable way to introduce undergraduate students to primary research opportunities in Archaeology, History, African-American Studies, Human and Wildlife Ecology and Cultural Geography. Developing a database of the extant material remains from one of the plantations on the Ames land base will allow faculty and students the opportunity to become familiar with several of the research opportunities at the site. The website will include annotated photographs, scanned historic documents related to the site, and plot maps that will be linked to the photo database. The website will lay the groundwork for future excavations, and encourage the involvement of interested faculty members from Rhodes and other ACS schools in the development of future research projects and field school seasons at the Ames Plantation.

7. Curriculum:

This project has great potential to immediately contribute to several existing and planned courses. The key components of the project are the desire to establish field school and research opportunities for undergraduate students, and the need to introduce material culture into the curriculum. This photographic survey and the resultant website will help facilitate the integration of the material culture at the Ames Plantation into courses such as Archaeology 220 (cross-listed as Art 220): "Archaeological Methods," and Archaeology 210 (cross-listed as Anthropology 250): "Introduction to Material Culture." A variety of courses in the History Department will be able to take advantage of this website: Hist. 243: "Slavery in the US," Hist. 247: "The American South," and Hist. 249: "Black and White Women in the History of the American South." Additionally, the planned field school at this site (Archaeology 450) will be enhanced by this survey and the website. As the first documented survey of the Fanny Dickens Plantation, the

project will lay the groundwork for many future excavation seasons and hands-on research projects on 19th century plantation culture. With approval by the faculty in October, the proposed Archaeology Minor at Rhodes will also be enhanced by this project.

8. Assessment:

The project will be evaluated based on the completion of two parts of the proposal: 1) the Fanny Dickens Plantation survey, map, and annotated photo collection; and 2) the successful development of a website that is useful to students and faculty who are interested in material culture. The tangible results of the website can be determined by the beginning of the Fall semester of 2006, at which time the website should be available for use. Both quantitative and narrative assessment tools could be employed to assess: 1) the effectiveness of the website to communicate information about the plantation, 2) the enhancement of particular learning goals for courses that interact with archaeology, material culture, and 19th century history, and 3) the rate of interest from colleagues and students at Rhodes and other ACS schools in the proposed field school at the Ames Plantation.

9. Collaboration and Dissemination:

The long term goal of establishing an archaeological field school at the Ames Plantation is a project that will open up research opportunities for interested faculty and students from all ACS schools. With the development of a website that illustrates the types of research that can be done at this huge land base, it is hoped that other faculty will take advantage of the archaeological and historical material, and that students will see opportunities for original research in one of the many disciplines related to archaeological field work. Collaboration with at least eight other faculty members from five departments at Rhodes who are interested in this site and/or this historical period will be immediately forthcoming. The website will be a launching point for familiarizing oneself with the cultural resources at Ames, and this material can be used in several courses in Anthropology, Archaeology, Art, GIS, Chemistry, and Religious Studies. It is also hoped that this project will enhance the relationship between the Rhodes Institute for Regional Studies and the new Archaeology Program.

10. References

Allen, Dan S. IV

1999 *1999 Historical and Archaeological Investigations of the Postbellum Tenant Plantation Phenomena as Expressed on the Ames Plantation, Fayette and Hardeman Counties, Tennessee.* DuVall & Associates, Inc., Franklin, Tennessee. Submitted to the Hobart Ames Foundation, Grand Junction, Tennessee.

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Hobart Ames Foundation

2005 "Welcome to Ames Plantation." <<http://www.amesplantation.org>>, August 2.