

Struggles of a Sugar Society: Surveying Plantation-Era Montserrat, 1650–1850

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Abstract A major obstacle to understanding Montserrat’s sugar industry and the often-contentious social dynamics that accompanied it has been the absence of a comprehensive study of the small Caribbean island’s plantation-era cultural landscape. We employ a multi-scalar approach, combining archival research and archaeological survey data, to trace the island’s shifting socio-cultural composition and fluctuating sugar industry over the course of two centuries (ca. 1650–1850). Adopting an island-wide perspective on the interpretation of Montserrat’s plantation-era remains, we expand the breadth and depth of understandings about the island’s sugar society through comparative, multi-sited analyses. Our findings underscore the importance of extending Caribbean plantation studies beyond individual estates.

Keywords Montserrat · Sugar plantations · British Caribbean · Archaeological survey

Introduction

On St. Patrick’s Day, March 17, 1768, a group of black and creole Montserratians staged an uprising against the small Caribbean island’s white plantocracy. Sugar production was well past its 1735 peak in output and profitability, and the owners of Montserrat’s approximately 50 sugar estates had become increasingly absent from the island’s fledgling plantation-based economy. By the late 1760s, as a result of dwindling provisions, labor shortages, and increasingly strict oversight, enslaved laborers faced malnutrition, severe restrictions, and worsening living conditions (English 1930, p. 226; Miles and Munby 2006; Ragatz 1931, 1963).

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The St. Patrick's Day uprising was a revolt by members of the island's enslaved and free communities against the oppressive conditions of the plantation system that dictated their lives on Montserrat. The plan for executing the uprising involved setting ablaze Government House in the capital town of Plymouth, where a group of white planters would be gathered to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. In advance of the attack, the rebels enlisted the slaves who worked inside Government House to discreetly remove weapons from the premises. As the start of the uprising drew near, one of the domestic slaves allegedly grew uneasy and foiled the rebellion by divulging the plot to her master. Martial law was declared, and all who were involved in planning the uprising were subsequently captured and hanged.

Although under British control for all but 2 years (1782–84) of its colonial history, the overseas territory of Montserrat (102 km²) stands out today among its neighbors as the so-called “Emerald Isle of the Caribbean,” an identity that is both rooted in the Irish culture of the island's earliest European settlers and perpetuated by present-day commemorations of St. Patrick's Day (Fig. 1). Since 1985 St. Patrick's Day has existed as an official national holiday on Montserrat; the week-long festival jointly honors the island's Irish heritage and the courage of the “freedom-fighters” involved in the 1768 uprising (Fergus 1994, pp. 73–73, 266; Higgins 2011, pp. 197–198; Messenger 1994; McAtackney et al. 2014; Mullin 1992, pp. 219–221; Skinner 2004, pp. 141–170). As we discuss elsewhere (McAtackney et al. 2014; McAtackney and Ryzewski, *Historic and contemporary Irish identity on Montserrat*, the “Emerald Isle of the Caribbean, unpublished), the holiday has become integral to Montserrat's contemporary island identity and tourism industry, especially during the present volcanic disaster recovery process.

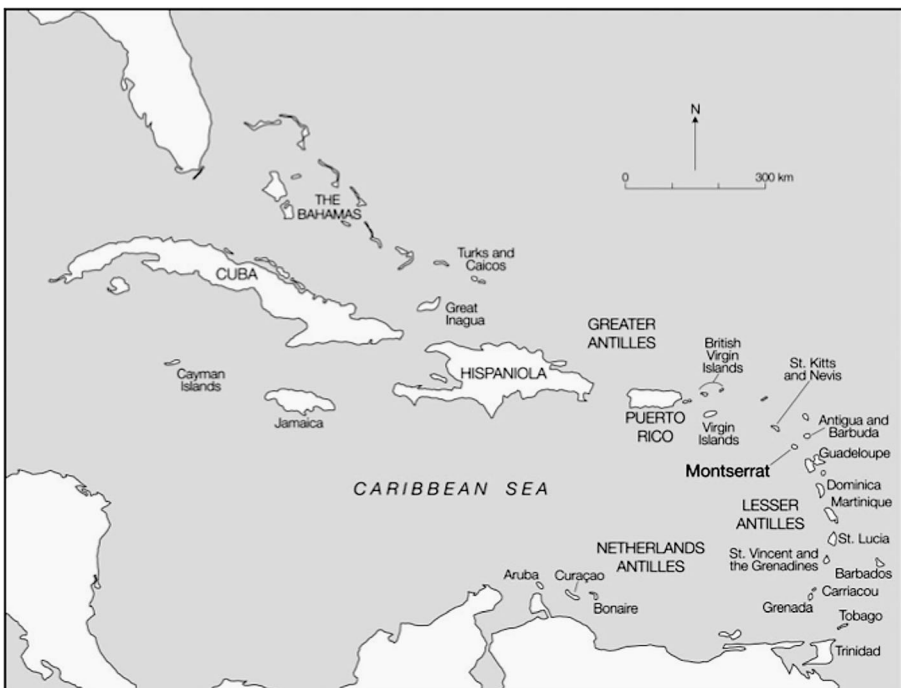


Fig. 1 Map of the Caribbean showing the location of Montserrat

Montserrat's Irish legacy has been foregrounded in prior historical and anthropological research (Akenson 1997; Gwynn 1929, 1932; Higgins 2011; Messenger 1994; Skinner 2004), but often at the expense of recognizing the complexity and diversity of the cultural identities and the rapidly changing socio-economic circumstances that shaped the island's plantation-based society over the course of two centuries.

In the following discussion, we step back from such attempts to locate an authentically or predominantly "Irish" past in Montserrat's historical and archaeological records and instead enlist archival, landscape, and material culture data to assemble a diachronic history and archaeology of the island's cultural landscape during the plantation era (ca. 1650–1850). In doing so, we chart Montserrat's shifting sugar industry and society with an aim towards understanding the extent to which island identities changed alongside, and in response to, the era's dynamic colonial, demographic, and economic milieu.

A number of archaeologists and historians in recent years have suggested that the Lesser Antilles was a dynamic and heterogeneous setting in which people pursued and expressed economic interests and cultural affiliations in quite variable ways (Lenik 2012; Paquette and Engerman 1996; Sheridan et al. 1996). If this was so, then our methodological approaches to cultural landscapes should be configured in ways that are appropriate to take account of such a situation. We adopt such an outlook in this paper in our employment of an island-wide perspective involving multiscalar analyses (cf. Clement 1997; Delle 1994).

Our discussion begins by positioning Montserrat's plantation-era sugar industry relative to those on neighboring Leeward Islands. In summarizing the resources used to reassemble Montserrat's plantation-era culture history, we call attention to the unique obstacles facing historical and archaeological studies of the island. Next, an overview of archaeological survey methods and findings serves to ground our subsequent discussions. Our methodological approach to understanding Montserrat's plantation system is distinct, in that it is landscape survey-based, multi-sited, and comparative; it considers material and historical evidence both at and beyond the industrial and residential cores of Montserrat's sugar estates and also maintains an integrative temporal perspective that does not restrict the scope of study to rigidly bounded periods of time (e.g., prehistory/history or particular centuries). A substantive, chronologically organized synthesis of Montserrat's plantation system follows the methods discussion. In our attempts to trace the island's cultural and socio-economic history during the plantation era, we have encountered notable disparities in resources and data; these demonstrate the extent to which historical sources and archaeological evidence do not always speak to the same issues or appear to be entirely congruent with each other. Owing to these differences, the chronological discussion draws more heavily on archival and historical sources, though every effort is made to integrate material culture and landscape data when possible.

The synthesis is followed by a brief discussion of archaeological data that sit outside of orderly chronological narrative histories, the bounds of plantation estates, and even conventional historical archaeological material culture typologies. We argue that these unconventional and multi-period data are no less important to understanding the complexities of Montserrat's sugar society. In fact, these uniquely archaeological sources provide an opportunity for historical archaeologists to trace intra- and inter-island connections whose results may provide nuanced understandings of the cultural

identities, socioeconomic distinctions, and networks of interaction at play in the plantation era, both on Montserrat and elsewhere across the Caribbean.

Montserrat's Sugar Struggles, Past and Present

Historical Overview

Following his 1848 tour of the island's extant sugar-producing facilities, Governor-General of the Leeward Islands, James Macaulay Higginson, concluded that Montserrat's sugar industry was among the "least prosperous and advanced of the islands under his authority" (Hall 1971, p. 112). Indeed, throughout its history of sugar production, which began ca. 1650, Montserrat consistently ranked among the lowest producers in the Leeward islands (Hall 1971, p. ix). Disadvantaged by its small size, steep terrain, and lack of adequate harbors, Montserrat's sugar estates never reached the substantial levels of production achieved on nearby St. Kitts or Antigua (Sheridan 1973, pp. 181–183).

Montserrat's sugar industry reached its peak annual production of 3,150 t in 1735, at which time the island's output equated to a mere 15 % of the total sugar exported from the Leeward islands. At its height, the largest eighteenth-century sugar exports from Montserrat were comparable with those of Nevis. From 1735, Montserrat's industry slowly declined until the mid-nineteenth century (Fig. 2; Akenson 1997, p. 154; Fergus 1994, pp. 44–45). Following emancipation, during the 1840s the decline in sugar production so severely depressed Montserrat's economy that regular shipping traffic was suspended. As a result, in 1847–48, a year when cultivation activities on 17 sugar estates were either substantially reduced or totally abandoned, not a single freight

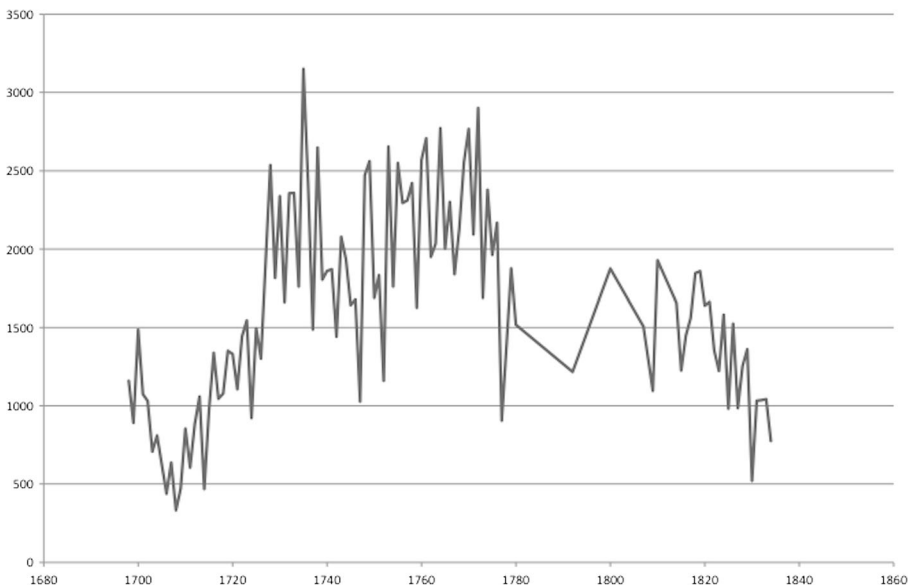


Fig. 2 Sugar production (in tons) on Montserrat, 1697–1834. Data from Deerr (1949), p. 196; Fergus (1994), p. 44, table 2.2

vessel called at Montserrat (Davy 1854, p. 419). By 1849 direct trade between Montserrat and Great Britain had altogether ceased, temporarily severing a vital artery of communication and exchange (Hall 1971, p. 126). Also accompanying the end of the sugar industry were the dire conditions facing Montserrat's residents, the vast majority of whom were Afro-Caribbean estate laborers. Island residents reportedly faced unprecedented suffering and squalor in their daily lives, triggered by the demise of the sugar industry, but also worsened by a smallpox epidemic in 1849–50 and a simultaneous 10-month long drought (Davy 1854, p. 420).

Present Obstacles

The impact of recent volcanic activity on the island's natural and cultural resources is an obvious challenge facing all scholars conducting research on or about Montserrat. Ongoing eruptions of the Soufrière Hills volcano since 1995 have rendered the south of the island uninhabitable, buried the capital city of Plymouth, and dispersed Montserratians worldwide. Volcanic activity has severely impacted the island's archaeological heritage, destroying the Trants and Galways plantations (among many others), threatening countless archaeological sites both known and unrecorded with risk of destruction, placing numerous surviving sites permanently off-limits and inaccessible, and scattering archival records among various repositories on- and off-island (Watters and Norton 2007).

Ample details about Montserrat's sugar exports and demography survive in government, legal, and other administrative documents, particularly those that offer dry statistics in censuses, Calendars of State Papers, and other reports of Governors back to Parliament. More descriptive and personal sources including correspondence, probate inventories, property descriptions, and disputes exist but often prove difficult to access, since they are widely dispersed piecemeal across public and private collections in the Caribbean, United States, and Great Britain. Untold quantities of historical records were relocated during volcanic eruptions over the past two decades, and some may have been left behind within the now-buried administrative buildings in Plymouth.

Another challenge facing researchers is that the layout and landscape of Montserrat's sugar production facilities and associated domestic spaces remain largely unknown from historical maps and inventories. Unlike other British Caribbean islands, Montserrat's sugar estates were never thoroughly inventoried during the plantation era, a fact noted as early as 1846 when Davy (1854, p. 409), Inspector General of Army Hospitals, visited Montserrat and bemoaned that the island was "never accurately surveyed." Only three historical maps of the island predating 1850 are known to us: Blathwayt Map, 1673 (John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, 8189–30); Map of Montserrat, 1734 (National Archives, Kew, London, CO 152/20); and Map of Montserrat, 1832 (John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, C-8102). No plats appear to exist.

A final obstacle to understanding Montserrat's sugar industry and its social dynamics on an island-wide basis has been the absence, until recently, of a comprehensive inventory of plantations and other settlements on Montserrat. In 2010 John Cherry and Krysta Ryzewski initiated the Survey and Landscape Archaeology on Montserrat (SLAM) project with the dual aim of addressing this shortcoming and examining

changing settlement and land-use over the course of the island's ca. 4,000-year history (Cherry et al. 2012a, b, 2014; Cherry and Ryzewski 2014; Ryzewski and Cherry 2012).

Survey and Landscape Archaeology on Montserrat

Since the first season of fieldwork in 2010 the SLAM project has conducted nearly 70 extensive tract pedestrian surveys in the safe zone of the island's north. Coupled with data from satellite remote sensing, airborne LiDAR, and differential GPS mapping, the research team has located and mapped the remains of 42 plantation-era sites, from the northernmost tip of the island to the inland, upper elevations of the Centre Hills. Twenty-nine of these sites were identified as part of agricultural or industrial operations associated with sugar production (Fig. 3). Each of the plantation sites located by the SLAM team has been surveyed to determine their spatial extent and boundaries and to create detailed maps of the estates' buildings and landscape modifications within the context of their local natural setting. SLAM archaeologists collect standard GPS data on each site and feature location, and differential GPS data with sub-meter accuracy is used to record the dimensions of buildings and prominent landscape modifications. Building from the approaches of other archaeological landscape studies conducted on Montserrat, Nevis, and Jamaica (Delle 1998, 1999; Delle et al. 2011; Hauser 2011; Meniketti 2009; Pulsipher 1994), we integrate geospatial data from both well-known and historically obscure estates, and from the settlements surrounding them, in order to reassemble Montserrat's social and physical plantation landscapes at multiple scales of resolution and to assess patterns of landscape use, spatial layout, access to natural resources, vantage points, routes of movement, and boundaries between estates.

The SLAM project's survey results have significantly expanded the inventory of historic sites previously identified from the 1673 Blathwayt map and other studies (Mountserrat Island 1673; Pulsipher 1987; Miles and Munby 2006). Prior to 2010, 15 historic plantations were known to have existed in the area of the safe zone (11 appear on the Blathwayt Map), and, with the exception of the Little Bay Plantation, none of the estates had been examined by archaeologists or historians (Miles and Munby 2006). Only a handful of other historic sites in the region were previously known to the Montserrat National Trust, including the military installation at Carr's Bay and the nineteenth-century remains of the Sturge family residence at The Cot.

Several of the former sugar plantations surveyed by SLAM archaeologists, including Blake's, Drummonds, Rendezvous, and Locust Valley, were already known locally through oral histories or archival records. At these four plantation sites the estate remains include substantial standing ruins of stone-built industrial buildings and numerous additional landscape features (see Fig. 3). Other plantation-era properties, such as those at Thatch Valley, Valentine Ghaut, and Silver Hills, were situated in areas of the island that are presently remote and difficult to access. These sites are not well-reported in historical documents; their material traces are less prominent on the landscape; and information about their spatial layout, age, industrial or agricultural operations, and inhabitants, is known mainly from surface and sub-surface artifact remains (predominantly historic ceramics), building foundations, and landscape modifications (Ryzewski and Cherry 2013). In comparison to the more prominent estates, these poorly documented or previously unidentified sites appear to have been less

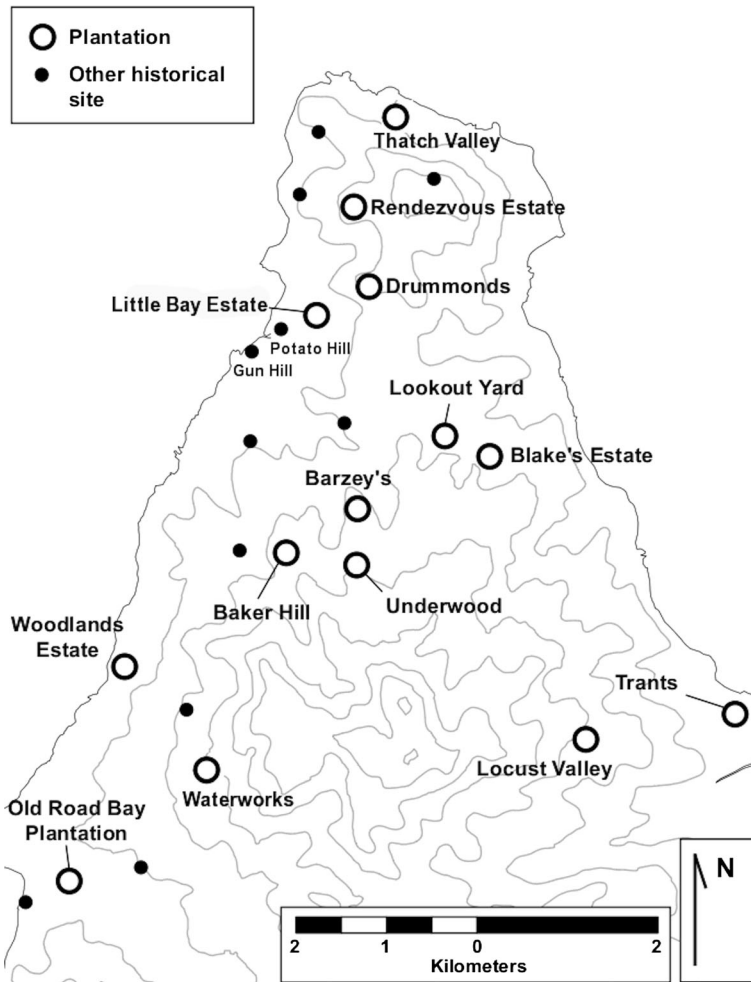


Fig. 3 Map of the safe zone in the north of Montserrat and the plantation-era sites discussed in text

substantial, with no more than two stone-built structures visible in the core settlement or industrial area of each site. It is likely that these estates operated cattle-mills and/or constructed their buildings using impermanent materials and less stone; both techniques reflect construction practices that were more common during the eighteenth century on Montserrat and neighboring islands such as Nevis than were windmill-powered sugar production and stone or brick constructions (Leech 2005; Pulsipher 1986, p. 60).

The material culture assemblages recovered from the surface and subsurface of historic sites by SLAM archaeologists provide perhaps the most abundant dataset for detailing the daily lives, identities, and social dynamics of those involved in Montserrat's plantation-era society. In the northern region of Montserrat, surface assemblages of historic artifacts are remarkably common, perhaps due to the fact that much of the area is remote and rugged terrain, which, since the end of the plantation era until very recently, has been sparsely inhabited. Another contributing factor to the widespread visibility of surface assemblages is the region's shallow stratigraphy and

poor, erosion-prone soil. These conditions have been observed in the course of several SLAM project excavations, shovel test-pit surveys, and gridded surface collections, including those at Gun Hill, Valentine Ghaut, Thatch Valley, Potato Hill, and Rocklands Estate, where, with the exception of deposits located in or adjacent to substantial structural remains, subsoil tends to extend no deeper than 30 cm before volcanic bedrock is encountered (Ryzewski and Cherry 2013; Cherry and Ryzewski 2013a).

Since 2010 the SLAM project has collected over 15,000 artifacts in the safe zone, primarily through systematic surface survey. Assemblages recovered from plantation-era sites primarily consist of mass-produced European pottery, but also of locally made coarseware pottery, glass bottles, tobacco pipes, metal objects, and lithics. In northern Montserrat the plantation landscapes have yielded an average of 100 diagnostic historic pottery sherds per site, with the exception of several larger pottery assemblages at Blake's Estate ($n=257$), Rendezvous Village ($n=330$), Thatch Valley ($n=314$), Drummonds ($n=402$) and Potato Hill ($n=2,414$).

In the case of archaeological research on Montserrat, the historical and cultural relationships tied to assemblages of the plantation era and their changes over time are best discerned by considering the broader temporal and social contexts of plantation life-histories, including their origins, use, modifications, and abandonment. Such an approach was pioneered on the island by Lydia Pulsipher and C. Mac Goodwin in their study of Galways Plantation over the course of its 250-year history. Their interdisciplinary and long-term perspective, involving archaeology, history, and cultural geography, has set a standard in the British Caribbean for its approach to plantation studies (Pulsipher 1982, 1994; Pulsipher and Goodwin 2001). Their approach was extended by Jean Howson (1990, 1995) at Delvins Plantation in the 1990s, and more recently by Lydia Pulsipher, Mary Beaudry, and Jessica Striebel MacLean in their work at the Little Bay Plantation (Beaudry and Pulsipher 2007; MacLean n.d.). It is with these colleagues' work in mind that we have assembled a synthesis of Montserrat's plantation system drawn from both historical and archaeological records.

Montserrat's Plantation System: Historical-Archaeological Synthesis

In our efforts to understand the island-wide history of Montserrat's sugar plantation system, we intend the following chronologically ordered synthesis to trace its long-term development, trajectory, fluctuations, and social dynamics.

Seventeenth-Century Roots

The first Europeans to inhabit Montserrat were a group of Irish settlers who arrived in 1632. Just 2 years later an account written by a visiting Jesuit priest, Father Andrew White, describes the island as a "noble plantation" of Irish Catholic settlers, suggesting that these first settlers were quick to develop the island's landscape, property holdings, and reputation (Akenson 1997, pp. 30–35). The remainder of the seventeenth century saw the island populated by a diverse range of Irish, Anglo-Irish, and, to a lesser degree, English settlers and African slaves.

Status in Montserrat's early plantation-based society was accorded by settlers' positions as planters, indentured servants, skilled laborers, exiled criminals, slaves, or

small farmers. Many of those occupying the lower ranks of the socioeconomic spectrum were recently freed from indentures to English planters on St. Kitts and Nevis (Dunn 1972, p. 124). Ethnicity was an important social marker in the seventeenth century, even before the importation of African slaves to the island began. During the second half of the century, the ethnic composition of Montserratian society was notable for the strong presence of residents who self-identified as Irish. The first census, in 1678, categorized 70 % of the white residents as Irish, by far the majority of them small farmers and laborers (Pulsipher 1986, p. 27, table 1; Akenson 1997, pp. 189–200). The British colonial government viewed the Irish underclass as a troublesome, “dissident majority,” and they attempted to constrain the community’s influence by allocating to them land parcels in areas on the margins of Plymouth, especially in the town of Kinsale and other nearby villages within St. Patrick’s Parish. The inhospitable region of St. Patrick’s Parish in the island’s southwest and far south was notable for its poor soil, steep terrain, and dry land; it held little potential for profitable sugar production (Akenson 1997, p. 112, Map 4).

During the first generations of European colonization, prior to the 1660s, Montserrat’s sugar industry and its corresponding dependency on slave labor were slow to develop. Historical records indicate that the first generation of European settlers grew a mixture of agricultural crops, including tobacco, indigo and cotton, but little archaeological evidence of this early period on Montserrat has yet to be located (Akenson 1997). The sugar industry’s growth during the late-seventeenth century was hampered by the limited availability of slaves, devastating natural disasters, and damages suffered in the wake of frequent invasions by the Dutch, French, Carib Indians, and buccaneers (Crandall 2000; Fergus 1994, pp. 45–51; Sheridan 1973, pp. 170–172; Zacek 2010, p. 56).

Enslaved Africans were first imported to Montserrat in the 1650s at the same time that sugar cultivation was introduced. During the 1660s, an elite class of wealthy planters emerged alongside the initial success of sugar production. Several of the early planter elite were of Irish or Anglo-Irish descent and hailed from the “Tribes of Galway” (Akenson 1997, pp. 49, 68). They included the Blake family, who established Blake’s Estate in the island’s north in the late 1650s; the Galway and Stapleton families, who developed estates in the south and west at Galways and Waterwork during the 1660s; and others, such as the Lynch, Tuitt, Trant, Broderick, and Farrell families, all of whom had amassed profitable estates by the early eighteenth century (Johnston 1965).

Although by 1700, several villages and more than a third of the island’s 48 sugar estates had Irish names, records suggest that the emergent planter elite of Irish ancestry maintained connections to Ireland insofar as they served their economic interests. Only a few Irish-descended planters exploited social networks to establish profitable commercial links between Ireland and Montserrat, as was the case with Nicholas Tuitt, first during the tobacco trade of the 1640s, and then alongside the increasing sugar production of the early eighteenth century (Higgins 2011, pp. 189–190; Zacek 2010, p. 74). More frequently, however, planters found that retaining their privileged position within Montserrat’s sugar society involved allying themselves against their poorer fellow countrymen (Higgins 2011; Zacek 2010, pp. 79–85). Irish-descended planters such as David Galway formally distanced themselves from their ancestry and secured their economic interests by establishing loyalty with British authorities. In January 1668, Galway did so by signing a petition that condemned the collaboration of farmers,

laborers, and servants from St. Patrick’s Parish with the French during their invasion of the island in 1666 (Pulsipher 1982, p. 247; Zacek 2010, pp. 80–83). Above all else, the planter elite of Irish and Anglo-Irish ancestry prioritized securing and extending their personal stake in sugar production profits (Blake 1905).

In comparison with other Caribbean islands in the late seventeenth century, African slaveholding on Montserrat expanded more gradually. According to Governor Stapleton’s 1678 census for the four Leeward islands for which he was responsible, one quarter of Montserrat’s households owned African slaves; of the island’s 3,775 residents, only 26 % were enslaved Africans (Oliver 1910, pp. 316–320, 342–347) (Fig. 4). This percentage is lower than those for the three neighboring islands (St. Kitts 43 %, Antigua 48 %, Nevis 52 %; Dunn 1972, pp. 127, table 12). By contrast to Montserrat and its neighbors, records from Barbados during the same period report a considerably larger island population of 54,000 residents, with slaves comprising 60 % of the total population and with 82 % of island residents owning them (Dunn 1972, pp. 67, 91, 127–129, 154–155; Fergus 1994, p. 52). Despite Montserrat’s relative enslaved labor shortage, Irish and Anglo-Irish planters were among the island’s largest slaveholders. In 1678, in the northern Devereaux division of St. Peter’s Parish, John Blake, Sr., a recent immigrant from Galway, owned 38 slaves, comprising 24 % of the region’s total slave population; another Irishman, John Davies, was the island’s largest slaveowner, holding 64 slaves (Oliver 1910, pp. 316–320, 342–347).

Even in an environment where nearly 75 % of the households were not slaveholders, by the late seventeenth century racially based social distinctions were becoming ingrained by government policies, as evidenced by a series of acts passed on Montserrat in the 1680s. One such regulation, “An Act Restraining Christians from Confederating with Negroes,” prohibited all manner of casual interactions between white and black island residents (Stapleton Papers 1683; Mountserrat Acts of Assembly 1668–1740; Fergus 1994, pp. 66–73). Anxieties about the shifting cultural landscape of the time are also reflected in the island government’s efforts to assert and maintain white authority through official policies, as apparent in the passage of the 1683 “Act to Incourage ye

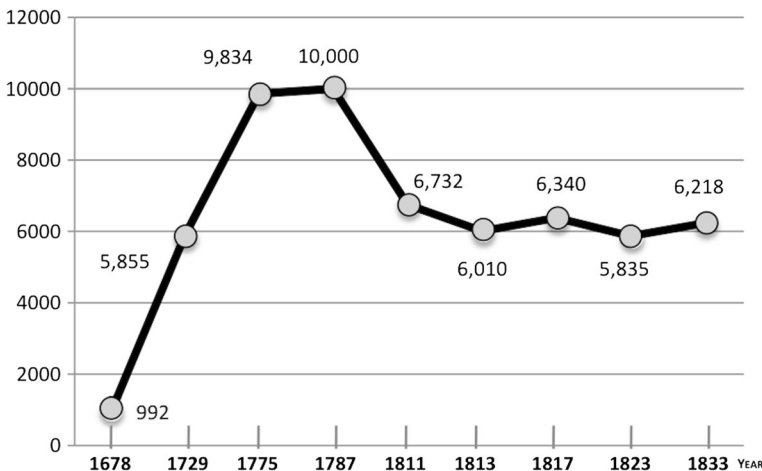


Fig. 4 Montserrat’s slave population over the course of the plantation era. Data from Akenson (1997), Wheeler (1988)

Increase of White People on this Island,” which required every slave owner to procure “a white man for every ten Workeing Negroes he hath impor[ted to] this island” (Stapleton Papers 1683).

Montserrat’s seventeenth- and eighteenth-century plantations were of relatively modest size, averaging 200–400 ac (81–162 ha); in contrast, by 1670 Jamaica was already home to dozens of plantations that were in excess of 1,000 ac (405 ha) (Dunn 1972, pp. 169–175; Oliver 1916, pp. 302–311; Pulsipher 1977). On Montserrat the largest plantation during the early period of sugar production was Galways Estate, which covered 1,320 acres (Pulsipher and Goodwin 2001, p. 171). Other estates, such as Governor William Stapleton’s Waterwork plantation in St. Peter’s Parish, began as a moderately-sized estate (573 ac; 232 ha), but later grew into a more substantial holding with the family’s acquisition of adjacent lands through purchase and intermarriage (Calendar of State Papers 1669–74, pp. 119–120; Johnston 1965).

Although the first known map of Montserrat appearing in the 1673 Blathwayt Atlas suggests that the earliest sugar plantations were established in the southern half of the island, findings from the SLAM project’s recent archaeological surveys and excavations show that by the end of the seventeenth century, planters were actively exploiting terrain across the entire island, and at nearly all elevations (Cherry et al. 2012a; Mountserrat Island 1673; Pulsipher 1977). One early plantation site to elude historical description was located by archaeologists in the remote northern area of Thatch Valley. Artifact collection and shovel test excavations conducted in 2012 identified standing structural ruins, a settlement area, and the presence of late seventeenth- and early-to-mid eighteenth-century artifacts on the remote estate (Fig. 5). These findings suggest that the Thatch Valley area was utilized during the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, but also that the living and working areas of this estate, which are located on isolated, inhospitable land, were abandoned or relocated in response to the challenges sugar planters faced in the mid- to-late eighteenth century. Thatch Valley does appear as a sugar estate on the 1673 Blathwayt Atlas map of Montserrat, but it is not marked on either of the two other later historic maps of the island known to us (those of 1734 and 1832; see above). Interestingly, the estate appears in a different incarnation in later records from the mid-19th century, when it is listed as “Thatched Valley” [*sic*] in an 1841 Blue Book inventory for the British Parliament of “all sugar and stock estates in the island of Montserrat.” The 1841 record does not classify Thatch Valley as a “sugar estate” and its estimated value (£150) is the lowest among all of the 47 estates on the list, suggesting that by this time it was unimproved grazing land, lacking useable structures, and small in acreage.

By the turn of the eighteenth century, a powerful network of planters, many with Irish and Anglo-Irish backgrounds, comprised Montserrat’s planter elite. The island’s early sugar industry was unquestionably rooted in the actions of planters who were of Irish descent and affiliation, but the degree to which their Irish heritage influenced their social relationships over the course of the plantation era appears to have been highly variable. By contrast, those island residents of lesser status, especially the indentured servants, laborers, and farmers living in St. Patrick’s Parish and the increasing numbers of African slaves resident on the island’s sugar estates, were perhaps more frequently reminded of their backgrounds, as they were subjected to prejudices and government-issued restrictions that were enacted according to religion, ethnicity, and occupation. That such oppressive treatment did not effectively terminate cultural affiliations during



Fig. 5 The variety of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ceramics collected from the Thatch Valley site includes Staffordshire slipware, tin-glazed earthenware, agateware, and brown salt-glazed stoneware (photograph by Krysta Ryzewski)

the plantation era is perhaps evident from the fact that residents of the Irish villages of Kinsale and St. Patrick's, in groups occasionally as large as 2,000, repeatedly assisted Montserrat's foreign invaders throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Calendar of State Papers *n.d.*, pp. 1456, 1512; du Tertre 1667, pp. 199–205).

Heyday of Sugar Production and Slavery

By 1730 Montserrat's economy was fueled almost entirely by sugar production. The island's sugar industry was most successful between ca.1725 and 1775, owing to improved production techniques and an expanding slave labor force. Census figures from the first (1678) and second (1729) inventories document a massive demographic shift during the first half of the eighteenth century, accompanying the growth of sugar production and the influx of African slaves to the island. By 1729 the slave population vastly outnumbered white residents—an imbalance that continued to grow in step with increased sugar production thereafter (Oliver 1910, pp. 316–320, 342–347; 1916, pp. 320–311) (see Fig. 4). Between 1750 and 1780, Montserrat's population held fairly steady at between 10 and 11,000 residents (English 1930, pp. 224–225). During this period the most profitable sugar estate was Broderick's, owned by Michael White, valued in 1766 at £28,069. Broderick's estate inventory included at least 12 buildings,

300 ac (121 ha) of land (200 of them used for sugar cultivation), and 224 slaves (English 1930, pp. 224–225).

Descendants of Montserrat's seventeenth-century planter elite continued to control the majority of the island's sugar plantations during the eighteenth century, but they increasingly did so at a distance, as absentee estate owners (Zacek 2010, p. 92). Alongside soaring sugar profits and the rise of absenteeism came a shift in sugar estates' managerial structure; as owners diversified their commercial interests and relocated away from the industrial operations, they appointed resident managers to oversee the day-to-day operations of sugar production on their land (Johnston 1965, p. 181). By 1730, many of Montserrat's most long-standing plantation owners, including the Stapletons, Blakes, and Tuitts, resided off-island, but they continued to profit from sugar by expanding their estate holdings and broadening their social and economic connections regionally through kinship networks, marriages, and trade partnerships. The Stapleton family operated additional sugar plantations on Nevis, St. Kitts, and Antigua; the Blakes held property on Antigua and Barbados; and the Tuitts held ownership stakes in 14 sugar plantations on St. Croix (Johnston 1965, p. 181; Blake 1905; Higgins 2011, p. 189).

During the eighteenth-century heyday of sugar production, plantations continued to average 200–400 ac (81–162 ha) in size. Their spatial configuration and operations expanded, however, with improvements in the machinery used to process sugar cane. The 1729 census lists 23 windmills, 52 cattle mills, and 3 water-powered mills across the island (Oliver 1916, pp. 302–311). The majority of windmills, 19 of 23, operated on the most profitable plantations. Fifteen of the wealthiest plantations also operated more than one mill—typically, a substantial stone-built windmill and a cattle mill in combination—while smaller plantations tended to have only cattle mills (Miles and Munby 2006, p. 64). Archaeological surveys conducted by the SLAM project in 2013 and 2014 located the previously unreported remains of a second windmill base at both the Locust Valley and Waterwork Estates.

The island planters with the largest property holdings in 1730 included several families of Irish and Anglo-Irish descent: Farrell, Trant, White, Roach, and Lynch. Each of these planters owned between 150 and 225 slaves, and in most cases, two or more sugar mills. These documented associations between technology and the scale of plantation operations are not only useful in viewing distinctions between sugar estates' production processes, but they also assist with the interpretation of archaeological evidence from sites whose histories are less prominent in the surviving written records. Our archaeological survey results determined that, of the plantations surveyed in the safe zone, all were of relatively small to modest size. Examples include the sites of Blake's Estate (Fig. 6), Rendezvous, Drummonds, Little Bay, Locust Valley, and Fairy Walk, all of which were productive sugar works during the sugar industry's eighteenth-century peak. The largest plantation surveyed was Blake's Estate, which extended for at least ca. 1.5 km from the manor house and industrial facilities to its agricultural fields uphill, along the flanks of the Centre Hills in an area now called Upper Blake's. Based on the presence of standing building remains and visible foundations, most of these northern plantation complexes, regardless of elevation or proximity to the coast, contained the remains of between three and six stone-built buildings in their industrial cores. Archaeological maps of these northern complexes show considerable variation in the use of space on Montserratian sugar estates, with differences likely relating to

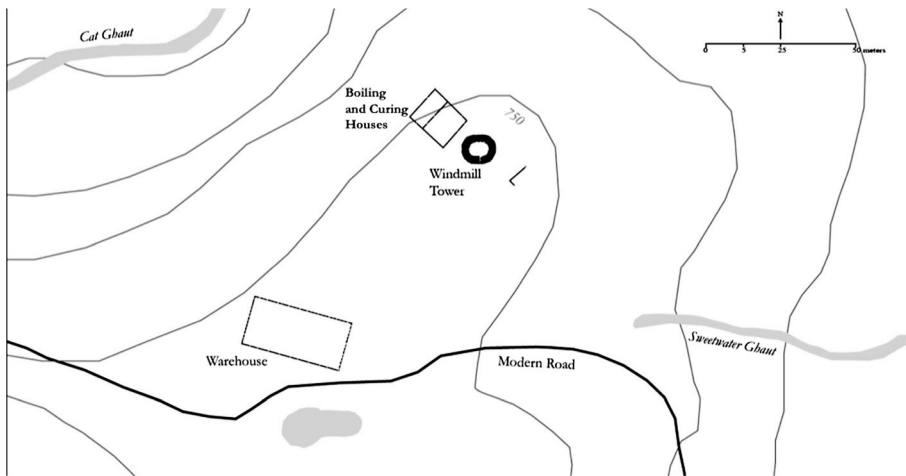


Fig. 6 The core industrial area of Blake's Estate sugar mill, showing stone-built structures and wall. (map by Luke Pecoraro)

environmental settings, production techniques, and the variable financial, labor, or natural resources available to the planters.

Some interesting patterns have emerged from the analysis and comparisons of artifact assemblages collected at individual plantation sites. Every plantation site surveyed shows evidence of long-term, multi-generational use or occupation, evident from the co-presence of historic artifacts with manufacturing date-ranges that span from the late seventeenth century to at least the mid-eighteenth century or later. In most cases, artifact manufacture date-ranges also extend into the early or mid-nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the majority of assemblages on Montserrat's plantations are comprised of mid- to-late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century ceramics, with creamware and then pearlware varieties (e.g., painted, shell-edge, transfer-print) being the two most commonly occurring types. This pattern is consistent with historical records, which identify the height of Montserrat's sugar production as occurring through the late eighteenth century.

Gradual Decline and Frequent Conflicts

Although Montserrat's sugar industry remained profitable until about 1780, its output and earnings began to decline as early as 1740. By 1745 sugar production had fallen 10 % from its peak in 1735, and it continued to vacillate unpredictably thereafter (although there were some strong harvests, for example, in the first half of the 1760s and in 1772). Historian Akenson (1997, pp. 154–170) has dubbed this slow period of decline after 1730 as “The Long Wind-Down.” Montserrat's sugar industry was destabilized by numerous setbacks, especially during the second half of the eighteenth century: damaging storms and floods (including hurricanes in 1737, 1740, 1744, 1747, 1756, 1766, 1772, 1780, 1786, and 1792); a blight infesting the cane fields between 1729 and 1735; an epidemic of Yellow Fever in 1755; and various raids and conflicts, culminating in the French occupation of 1782–84 (Crandall 2000, p. 3; Fergus 1994, pp. 45–59, 220–227; Wheeler 1988, pp. 18–34).

These setbacks had negative, lasting consequences on the entire plantation system, most especially on the lives of enslaved laborers, who suffered the most when Montserrat was short on food and other provisions (Mason 1993, pp. 103–131). In the decade leading up to the failed St. Patrick's Day uprising in 1768, Montserrat's plantations experienced widespread labor shortages; as a result, more slaves were forced to take on hard labor tasks, often regardless of age and gender (Mason 1993, p. 120). Such brutal conditions were enacted by plantation managers, who were under pressure to increase sugar production in the face of falling market prices and rising taxes, including those that the Montserrat government levied during the 1750s on all wind-, cattle-, and water-based mills (English 1930, p. 214).

In the years after the St. Patrick's Day uprising of 1768, Montserrat's sugar production declined rapidly, especially during the 1780s (see Fig. 2). This was due in part to soil exhaustion, high labor costs, and lack of technological innovation, but also to the increasing volatility of the sugar market in Britain at this time, the deleterious effects of the island's brief French occupation in 1782–84, and the impacts of more distant trade and maritime wars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Carrington 2002). Export records indicate that island planters began to diversify their crops by the end of the eighteenth century, indicating the end of sugar monoculture by that time. By 1789, 2,000 ac (809 ha) of the island's former sugar-cane fields were devoted to cotton; this area of cotton cultivation represented the equivalent of one-third of the agricultural land under sugar at that time. Unlike sugar, cotton was better suited to Montserrat's hilly terrain and its cultivation demanded fewer laborers. The expansion of cotton production would have necessitated new forms of industrial equipment and cultivation systems. It would have assuredly created a different form of landscape configuration, potentially evident in changing terracing systems, realignment of boundary walls, and repurposing of older sugar works' buildings.

Overall, the plantation-based society of eighteenth-century Montserrat was shaped by the increasing wealth, mobility, conflicts, and inequalities brought about by the expansion of the sugar industry. As profits increased, so too did the networks that were traversed in and beyond Montserrat by the planters, their products, and their slaves. Connections between Montserratians and other Caribbean islands are more apparent in the documentary records of the mid- to late 18th century, whereas linkages to Ireland and other European homelands appear less conspicuous. Traces of Irish heritage do remain visible during the eighteenth century and appear in the surnames listed in court cases, accounts of conflicts, property ownership records, and in the re-appropriation of Irish place-names for slaves; the island's 1758 slave inventories included individuals called Galway, Tipperary, Kilkenny, and Limerick (English 1930, p. 218).

Demise and Aftermath

While the few most profitable plantation estates on Montserrat expanded their labor forces and outputs during the early nineteenth century, most struggled to produce adequate quantities of sugar in the face of declining prices. Judging from the net import figures, slave ships appear to have stopped calling at Montserrat in the 1780s (Fergus 1994, pp. 42–45). By the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, Montserrat's slave population had declined from its peak of over 10,000 in 1768 to 6,732 in 1811 (Akenson 1997, p. 155; 1811 census figures in English 1930, pp. 165–175) (see Fig. 2).

This decline does not necessarily reflect an escalating rate of manumission following the outlawing of the British slave trade in 1807, but, historians suggest, it is more likely an indicator of how by 1800 Montserrat had become an *exporter* of slaves. Beginning in 1787, government slave inventories record the sale of slaves by Montserratian planters to off-island buyers (Browne 1993). This economic shift indicates that the sale of slaves had in fact become more profitable than the sale of sugar.

Despite changing demographic and economic conditions, on the largest of Montserrat's plantations the 1807 Slave Trade Act does not appear to have had any immediate effect on the shape, size, and slave labor force (this Act, of course, did not abolish slavery itself). Indeed, the largest estates operated with more slaves than ever before, in some cases as a direct consequence of the consolidation of smaller estates: as of 1811, Grant Allen of Richmond Hill held 201, Farm Estate operated with 209, Broderick's Estate held 210, and Queely Shiell owned 266 (English 1930, p. 271). On the eve of abolition in 1833 there remained 166 slave owners and 6,218 slaves on Montserrat, with 263 on Broderick's Estate and 370 held by Queely Shiell (English 1930, p. 271). (Following abolition in 1834, Shiell, the largest slave owner on the island, was paid £9,743, the most in compensation; Shiell and Anderson n.d.).

Following emancipation in 1834 and a devastating earthquake in 1843, most planters abandoned sugar production and left the island (Messenger 1975, p. 291). By 1850, the island economy was in a deep recession and residents faced increasing isolation, as lifelines to Europe were cut off by the cessation of direct trade between Montserrat and Great Britain. Although Montserrat's economy and society experienced major changes at the end of the sugar era, some legacies of the plantation system persisted. Among the most notable was the continuing influence of the ancestral Irish planters, particularly the Blake family, who despite living off-island, remained Montserrat's largest property owners in 1850 (Blake 1905; Blake Family of Langham n.d.; English 1930).

The sheer variety within artifact assemblages collected from historic settlement sites at and beyond plantation estates suggest that Montserratians responded differently across the island to the demise of the plantation system during the nineteenth century. Some long-occupied settlements, such as Potato Hill, close to the Little Bay Plantation on the island's northwest coast, appear to have been abandoned at the end of the plantation era. Only 13 % the historic ceramics from Potato Hill have manufacturing dates that extend into the nineteenth century and, of these, few extend beyond the last quarter of the nineteenth century (e.g., pearlware, whiteware, yellowware). As seen in historic photographs among the Sturge Family Papers, Potato Hill was apparently unoccupied and overgrown with vegetation by ca. 1890. Coupled with evidence from the artifact patterns detected during survey, the combination of historical and archaeological sources indicates that this hilltop settlement was at its peak prior to 1850 and did not survive into the twentieth century (Cherry and Ryzewski 2013a; Ryzewski and Cherry, The "spaces in-between": surveying a long-term settlement on Potato Hill, Montserrat, unpublished).

In contrast to Potato Hill, other proximate sites in the northernmost region of the island, such as Rendezvous Village and Drummonds, contain significantly higher proportions of mid- to late nineteenth-century ceramic varieties than earlier materials and than other plantation estates or settlements. The manufacture date ranges and quantities of artifacts recovered from these proximate settlements suggest that the sites expanded considerably during the mid- to late nineteenth century, as residents, who

along with their ancestors had worked and lived on nearby plantation estates for generations, relocated to them. Local oral history and modern material remains suggest that sites such as Rendezvous Village were occupied until the mid-twentieth century. Although we have yet to locate detailed historical information about who lived in the Rendezvous Village, Drummonds, and similar locales, given the fact that by 1811 94 % of the population was of Afro-Caribbean descent, it is probable that these modest settlements were inhabited by Montserrat's black communities in the decades leading up to and following emancipation (Akenson 1997, p. 160; English 1930, pp. 165–175).

The demographic and social shifts accompanying the expansion of nineteenth-century settlements at Rendezvous, Drummonds, and similar sites, are reflected by emergent patterns in artifact assemblages. At each of these sites, the most common ceramic types are nineteenth-century varieties of refined earthenware (pearlware and whiteware), the majority of which are hand-painted or industrial slipware vessels, the latter most commonly decorated with annular bands, floral motifs, and geometric or dendritic designs (Fig. 7). Most interesting, perhaps, is that these assemblages are comprised of vessels with a great variety of decoration; few, if any, vessel fragments appear to belong to matching sets. Similar distribution patterns have been observed among the artifact assemblages of nineteenth-century Afro-Caribbean communities by Laurie Wilkie and Paul Farnsworth in their work on plantation and post-emancipation society in the Bahamas (Wilkie 2000; Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999). Further analysis of these artifact assemblages have the potential to yield information about Afro-Caribbean communities' responses to the end of sugar production and the post-emancipation

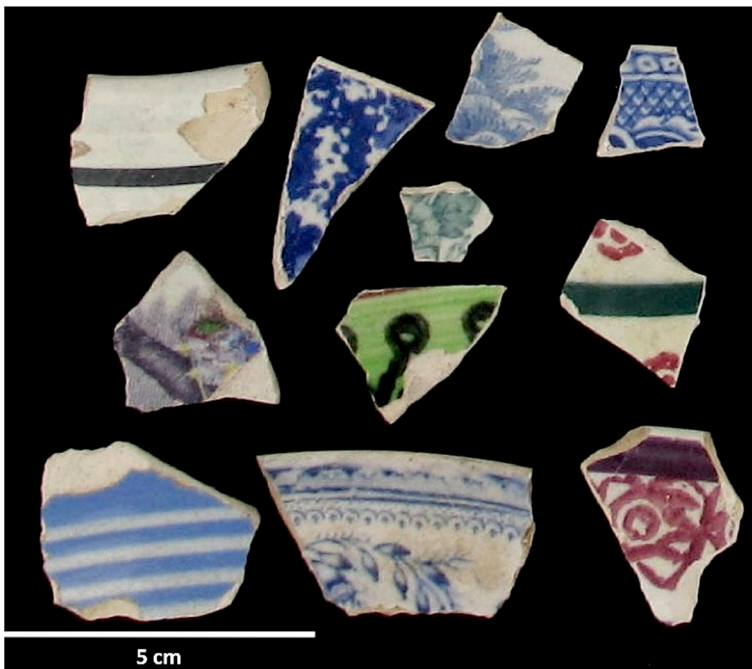


Fig. 7 Representative sample of nineteenth-century pearlware and whiteware ceramic decorative varieties recovered from Rendezvous Village. These decorative styles are among the most common throughout northern sites from the period (photograph by Krysta Ryzewski)

transition that they experienced, particularly concerning changes in individual's and communities' settlements, socioeconomic positions, and participation in intra-island social networks.

Whereas comparative analyses of nineteenth-century ceramic assemblages between historic sites might attest to market availability, local tastes, and consumption practices, another source of insight into the daily conditions of the island's lower-status communities towards the end of the plantation era appears in the presence of refashioned objects found at several historic and plantation sites throughout northern Montserrat. At these locations individuals modified mass-produced glass bottles, ceramics, and other materials to replicate the form, function, and importance of familiar utilitarian or symbolic objects. Illustrating this ingenuity in the face of limited resources, the recovery of over a dozen reworked artifacts during the SLAM project surveys demonstrates how intentional modifications to mass-produced European goods were not unusual, isolated incidences during the plantation era (cf. Armstrong 2010, Fig. 4, p. 153). The most commonly modified artifacts recovered were expedient knapped tools produced from glass bottles; examples have been collected from more than six sites in the north, including Underwood Estate, Blake's Estate, Upper Blake's, Potato Hill, Thatch Valley, and Rendezvous Village (Fig. 8). Other refashioned artifacts include tokens modified from broken pottery and lead scrap, found at Potato Hill, Gun Hill, Little Bay Plantation, and Upper Blake's, as well as creamware pottery sherds pierced with small holes, and beads made of glass and stone recovered from Potato Hill, Woodlands Estate and the Little Bay Plantation (MacLean 2012; Ryzewski and Cherry 2013; Cherry and Ryzewski 2013a) (Fig. 9).

Following emancipation, a few of the many abandoned sugar plantations provided the basis for new entrepreneurs on Montserrat to begin commercial production of citrus limes in 1852 (mainly for lime-juice, but also lime-oil and green limes). Quaker abolitionist Joseph Sturge acquired and converted several former sugar plantations

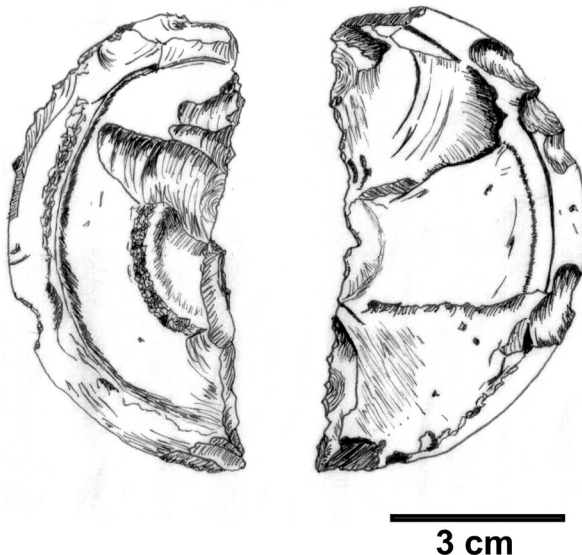


Fig. 8 An expediently knapped glass tool refashioned from the base of a dark green rum bottle, recovered from the Upper Blake's area of the Blake's Estate (illustration by Samantha Malette)



Fig. 9 Tokens and other modified objects refashioned from broken coarseware, creamware, and tin-glazed earthenware pottery vessels, recovered from gridded survey on Potato Hill in 2013 (photograph by Krysta Ryzewski)

for lime production, including Delvins and Bransbys outside of Plymouth, Olveston in Woodlands, and the Shiell plantations of Grove and Frye’s, through the “Encumbered Estates Act of 1854” (Fergus 1975, p. 39; 1994, pp. 128–132; Cust 1865). Sturge’s thriving lime company, which operated under the banner of the Montserrat Company, is an important postscript to the island’s sugar plantation history. Not only did the industry reuse plantation infrastructure to facilitate lime processing, but it also repurposed laborers from the system. In the lime industry, however, Sturge instituted an innovative wage-labor system and employed former slaves, demonstrating, he felt, that industrial production could thrive alongside the fair treatment of workers (Fergus 1975, p. 39).

Beyond the Plantation: Additional Insights from Landscape Archaeology

Crucially lacking from site inventories, archival documents, and historical maps is a sense of the material consequences and the landscapes at the fore of the events, processes, and lives involved in the plantation system. We suggest that to understand the conditions of daily life on Montserratian sugar estates during the plantation era, (whether for their owners, enslaved Africans, or other, free, non-elite residents), it is necessary also to examine the plantation landscape at multiple scales—both in and beyond the plantation core—and to compare the assemblages of material culture across sites (Ryzewski 2012). These are necessary steps towards understanding the fluctuating social and physical environments of the plantation-era landscape, and how the different groups of people living in these environments interacted with one another. We offer two brief insights from the SLAM project’s survey findings, focused on cultural landscapes and material connections, to introduce comparative data from beyond plantation estate cores and the corpus of historical records. This approach to collecting and recording landscape and survey data at multiple scales facilitates the understanding of the island’s

physical and cultural plantation landscapes, and the ways in which their inhabitants viewed Montserrat and the wider Caribbean (Hauser 2009; Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999).

Cultural Landscapes

Archaeological survey data from Montserrat demonstrate how, in many instances, plantation-era sites of different functions (e.g., industrial, residential, agricultural, military) existed in very close proximity to one another; in the immediate area surrounding Carr's Bay and Little Bay, for example, there co-existed the Drummonds, Rendezvous, Silver Hill, Gerrald's, and Little Bay plantations, the Potato Hill settlement, the Carr's Bay Battery, a newly-discovered substantial gun emplacement atop Gun Hill (Cherry and Ryzewski 2013b), and a wealth of other minor landscape features (for the dense concentration of archaeological resources discovered by survey in the Carr's Bay-Little Bay-Rendezvous Bay area, see Cherry et al. 2012a, Fig. 5, pp. 290–297) (see Fig. 3).

Altogether, archaeological survey has so far recorded 13 historical sites in the northern safe zone of Montserrat that are located beyond the central industrial or residential areas of plantation estates. Some locations, including Potato Hill and Rendezvous Village, produced evidence of modest settlements occupied for generations by non-elite communities, whose members would doubtless have contributed to the plantation economy in various capacities: as laborers, servants, craftsmen, farmers, or mariners. These are places that are entirely transparent in the official historical documents that record landholding. The sites and their proximity to one another inevitably shaped the daily lives of those who lived and labored in the vicinity. This sort of contextual and multiscalar landscape data, yielded by archaeological survey and coupled with historical research, moves the focus of Montserrat's plantation history well beyond individual estates, extending the breadth and depth of understandings about the island's plantation system and its social and environmental contexts over time.

More subtle clues to the occupation and uses of plantation-era landscapes, as well as potential access and movement between estates, are also visible in the hundreds of isolated manmade features that exist beyond the industrial and residential cores of sugar estate sites. The SLAM project has recorded over 250 such features. While often not easily datable, the majority of the features clearly relate to plantation-era landscape modifications, resource management, property limits, and access routes between settlements (e.g., terracing, boundary walls, water collection or irrigation features, tracks and pathways, etc.). As Pulsipher (1982, 1994) observed in her work at Galway's Plantation, some of these landscape features speak to planters' abilities to organize production and domestic activities effectively within generally inhospitable environmental constraints.

In the north of Montserrat, examples of landscape features are visible at the fairly high-elevation Rendezvous Estate, where a water-management system of cisterns and irrigation channels was built into the plantation architecture and surrounding landscape; and at Locust Valley Estate, very high up in the Centre Hills, an extensive area of terracing, perhaps for slave gardens or "provision grounds" (Pulsipher 1994), was constructed on the slopes of a steep hillside, clearly visible (despite dense neotropical

forest) in “bare earth” LiDAR imagery (Moloney et al. 2014; Opitz et al., Using airborne LiDAR survey to explore historic-era archaeological landscapes of Montserrat in the eastern Caribbean, unpublished). Substantial mortared stone walls are another important landscape feature, as at Drummonds and Rendezvous, constructed by planters to delimit estate boundaries. By enclosing landscapes, these walls created material distinctions of space, access, and ownership (Hicks 2007) (Fig. 10).

Material Connections

The archaeological records of Montserrat’s plantation-era sites demonstrate that there was considerable variety in the broad repertoire of European-produced and locally-made goods that island residents across the social spectrum incorporated into their daily lives; these may have been used in certain instances to emphasize status or assert authority, but apparently not as overt expressions of cultural or ethnic identity. None of the over 15,000 artifacts collected during the SLAM project surveys convey distinct expressions of particular ethnic affiliations in their origin or decorations. In the absence of such artifacts that might speak to expressions of unique cultural identities, the large quantity of coarseware pottery collected by SLAM is the most abundant source of information about the daily practices and local interactions among Montserrat’s residents, particularly the island’s non-elite communities.

Historical archaeologists in the Caribbean commonly refer to locally produced pottery as “Afro-Caribbean ware” or “Colonoware,” and they attribute its production



Fig. 10 SLAM archaeologists record a substantial stone boundary wall along the perimeter of Drummonds Estate (Feature 136). The wall is one example of the many such cultural landscape features recorded during the project’s landscape surveys (photograph by Krysta Ryzewski)

process and vessel morphology to enslaved and free African communities, who would have applied Old World manufacturing traditions to vessel manufacture (Armstrong 1998; Hauser and DeCorse 2003; Hauser et al. 2008). Given the scarcity of geochemical data collected from Montserrat’s pottery assemblages, the multi-period nature of many of the island’s archaeological sites, and the fact that, in the earliest historic period, other individuals of Irish, Carib Indian, or non-elite European descent may also have produced similar vessels, we are hesitant to attribute what may be a premature Afro-Caribbean designation to all recovered coarsewares until further analysis is conducted (Petersen and Watters 1988; Petersen et al. 1999).

One outcome of SLAM’s regional survey is that coarseware pottery has in fact been recovered at most sites where artifacts are present—including historic sites, but also prehistoric and multi-period sites. On Montserrat, late prehistoric (i.e., “post-Saladoid” or “Late Ceramic,” ca. 600/800–1500 CE; see Hofman and Hoogland, Archaeological overview of the Lesser Antilles and southern Caribbean islands, unpublished) coarseware pottery bears striking similarities in fabric, inclusions, firing techniques, decoration, and vessel form to the coarseware vessels collected from known historic contexts. Advances, for example, have been made in recent years in our knowledge of those types of ceramics that are generally held to represent the earthenware repertoire characterizing Island Carib peoples in the late prehistoric and earlier colonial periods (e.g., Boomert 2011).

Nevertheless, at least some of the recovered coarseware assemblages, when viewed in association with their findspots, other artifactual data, historical records, and landscape features, can be reliably associated with the historic period and can therefore be used to examine the living conditions and exchange networks among Montserrat’s plantation-era communities (Hauser 2011). Concentrations of plantation-era coarseware have been recovered by survey and shovel-test excavations at the Thatch Valley site (Area B), Upper Blake’s Estate (Area 2), and Potato Hill (grid-squares D7, A4, H3), where they comprise a significant proportion of the overall artifact assemblages (47 % at Thatch Valley, 42 % at Upper Blakes, and 13 % from the gridded survey area of Potato Hill) (Fig. 11). The presence of coarseware in discrete areas of these three particular settlements suggest not only the location of dwelling or activity areas, but when viewed in proportion to the overall assemblages at each site, they suggest that the excavation contexts are likely associated with non-elite settlements, which, depending



Fig. 11 Survey of the Upper Blake’s site recovered coarseware vessels with considerable variation in fabric, color, and decoration (photograph by Krysta Ryzewski)

on the period, could have been occupied by groups of European and/or African descent. Further analysis might consider the relative proportions and the diversity of material culture found at each of these sites as a means to infer the communities' population size, as well as other intra-island differences in the material repertoire of Montserrat's lowest-class individuals during the eighteenth century.

While artifact assemblages are potentially valuable sources for documenting the regional mobility of Montserrat's inhabitants during the plantation era, they provide little detail about the exchanges that may have taken place during the course of such movements, including the transfer of coarseware ceramics between individuals, the acquisition of raw materials for making everyday objects, or the transmittal of the technical knowledge needed for making them.

John Davy (1854, p. 415) noted in his 1846 visit to the island that Montserradians produced "articles of earthenware" for the local market, but given the mobility of Montserrat's inhabitants during the plantation era, it is also probable that at least some of the coarseware recovered archaeologically, or the raw materials and knowledge involved in making it, originated off-island and traveled to Montserrat through established inter-island exchange networks. Further archaeometric and contextual analysis of ceramics from Montserrat will examine sources of coarseware production, variety in vessel morphology over time, and differences between manufacturing techniques. Such ceramic studies will assist in mapping the local and inter-island networks of material exchange and social interactions alluded to in the historical records. Indeed, a useful start towards this end has already been made in a number of recent archaeometric studies, which evaluate the extent of pottery circulation between and within islands (Ahlman et al. 2008, 2009; Hauser and DeCorse 2003; Hauser et al. 2008; Kelly et al. 2008).

Montserrat is rather unusual among the Leeward Caribbean islands in its dearth of historical maps and plats, and limited access to archival records from the plantation era, but archaeological findings, particularly cultural landscape and material culture data, lend perspectives to the layers of the island's plantation history that highlight the social and physical environment, material worlds, and daily lives of those involved in its modest sugar industry.

Conclusion

Viewed over the long term, the cultural, economic, and material complexities of Montserrat's plantation era (ca. 1650–1850) are not sufficiently encapsulated by the story of the 1768 St. Patrick's Day uprising. While the uprising's narrative effectively communicates the lingering presence of an Irish heritage on eighteenth-century Montserrat, it conveys only an essence of the island's complex sugar-based society. It is in the passing details of the story that the rigid social stratification, racial inequality, ethnic diversity, and internal conflicts that shaped Montserrat's plantation-era cultural landscape begin to emerge.

In the narrative, the struggles within Montserrat's sugar society are most obvious in the separation and violent conflict between poor black residents and an elite white planter class. But more subtle distinctions are also present within the black and white groups at the heart of the story, neither of which were homogeneous ethnic communities. As historical records demonstrate, members of the white plantocracy were a

culturally diverse economic elite divided by an internal socioeconomic hierarchy and comprised by individuals with ethnic identities to which they adhered variably (English, Irish, Anglo-Irish, Scottish, Dutch).

It is noteworthy that the story credits a female domestic slave with exposing the planned uprising. This detail hints at the possibility that additional intra-group social distinctions also existed among the most marginalized Montserratians at the opposite end of the social spectrum. In particular, the narrative suggests that different degrees of access or responsibility may have afforded slaves more or less status within their own communities and within the broader context of Montserratian society. Such differences may have existed between those who were assigned to perform hard field labor versus those selected for domestic service or trained as skilled craftsmen.

Finally, mentioned only briefly in the narrative are those who are almost entirely absent from historical sources, the free black and creole Montserratians who also participated in the revolt. Along with their non-elite white counterparts, who are not mentioned in the story, these groups would have comprised ethnically-diverse, impoverished communities of laborers and indentured servants who benefited little from the sugar industry's successes and were relegated to the resource-poor island settlements in the most isolated, inhospitable parts of the island, such as St. Patrick's Parish or more remote northern lands. In contrast to the elite plantocracy and the enslaved laborers, details about these free, non-elite communities come almost entirely from the archaeological assemblages recovered from marginal settlements such as Thatch Valley, Rendezvous, and Potato Hill.

As suggested at the outset of this paper by the narrative of the St. Patrick's Day uprising and as firmly demonstrated by the preceding historical archaeological analyses, Montserrat's plantation-era sugar society was a heterogeneous setting in which people pursued and expressed economic interests and cultural affiliations in quite variable ways. We suggest that to understand the conditions during Montserrat's plantation era (whether for estate owners, slaves, or other, free, non-elite residents), it is necessary to examine the island's sociocultural landscape and built environment at multiple scales—in and beyond the industrial and residential core of plantation estates—and to compare material culture assemblages and archaeological features between these sites. Such comparative, multi-sited analyses will afford future examinations into intra- and inter-island mobility, exchange networks, and material worlds, both on and beyond Montserrat. The Lesser Antilles in the historic period was a shifting cultural mosaic of colonial territories (cf. Kelly and Bérard 2014; Kelly 2008; Singleton 2001); understanding an individual site, an island, or even a broader region requires us to take on board the degree to which plantation societies varied within and between these colonial frontiers.

It is our hope that more comprehensive and integrated understandings of Montserrat's plantation-era cultural history, materials, and landscapes will eventually promote a more critical awareness of the legacy and role that narratives like that of the St. Patrick's Day uprising play in shaping the island's heritage narratives and political memories today. Montserrat's chosen identity in the twenty-first century—at least the one it markets—is Irish. But this is just one identity that exists locally and fluidly among many others: Montserratian, African, English, Creole, East Indian, ex-patriate, and those of the large post-volcano diasporic Montserratian communities in North America and the United Kingdom. As Irish President Michael Higgins (2011, p.

188) recently observed, Montserrat’s Irishness is “a story caught in a net of myths,” and, as our work is revealing, it is an essence that requires integrating and comparing multiple lines of historical, archaeological, and geographical data to unravel.

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