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"The State of Decay into which the Island Has Fallen": Education and Social Welfare on Montserrat after emancipation

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Abstract
The social life of the newly created 'laboring classes' in the post-emancipation Caribbean has been relatively unexamined across a number of disciplinary perspectives. This paper argues for the need to bring together a variety of sources to enable researchers to gain a better understanding of this important, transitional time in Montserrat's history. Using evidence gathered from archives in the Caribbean, North America and the British Isles, materials excavated from a previously undocumented schoolhouse structure in the north of the island, and local memories of education on Montserrat, this paper illuminates an almost forgotten aspect of the lives of nineteenth-century laboring classes: the aspiration of education.

Keywords Post-emancipation · Education · Montserrat · Caribbean

Introduction

The first three decades after emancipation were abysmal times for Montserrat's residents, who suffered from impoverishment, dysfunctional governments, disease, and

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natural disaster. The local government of the early 1840s, described as the most "turbulent and disorderly" in the region, was ill-equipped to respond to post-emancipation socioeconomic transitions and unwilling to initiate reforms that would improve legal, educational, and justice systems for the new laboring class (Colonial Office 1851). Despite lack of government support, recently emancipated Montserratians quickly embraced primary education, and the number of day schools on Montserrat increased from one in 1838 to seventeen in 1840 (Montserratian Blue Books 1839, 1840; Berleant-Schiller 2014). For the next 35 years, until 1875, schooling on Montserrat was widespread but unregulated, and it varied in terms of religious affiliation, pedagogy, vocational training, and attendance. Our discussion focuses on Montserrat between 1838 and 1875; it combines archival, archaeological, and oral historical sources to explore the development of primary school education among the recently-freed laboring class living in St. Peter's Parish, the northernmost and most impoverished district on the island. Extant archival records provide details about the wider socioeconomic conditions on Montserrat at this transitional time, whereas artifacts and architectural remains from the Potato Hill site suggest that a structure there functioned in some capacity as a schoolhouse during this period. Taken together these sources illuminate the material and social dimensions of pedagogical institutions and how they responded to the demands of the new island society following emancipation.

Historical Background

The small island of Montserrat (102 sq. km) is a British Overseas Territory in the Caribbean Lesser Antilles (Fig. 1). Its long-standing association with British governance dates to the early seventeenth century, interrupted only by two short French occupations in 1666 and 1782–1784. Montserrat's first recorded European settlement dates to 1632, although recently uncovered Dutch, French, and Spanish descriptions of the island suggest that it may have been occupied by Amerindian and perhaps other European settlers during the 1620s, prior to formal British colonization (AGI 1636; Coppier 1645; van den Bel 2015).

Like the other islands of the Lesser Antilles, Montserrat's terrain was transformed to accommodate large-scale sugar cultivation in the later seventeenth century. A workforce of enslaved Africans and, increasingly but to a lesser degree, Irish and other European indentured laborers, sustained the sugar industry into the nineteenth century. Despite heavy investment in sugar, Montserrat consistently ranked among the least profitable producers in the Lesser Antilles; its productivity peaked in 1735 at 3150 tons and gradually diminished over the course of the following century, to an output of just 775 tons in 1834 (Deerr 1949: 196; Fergus 1994:44, Table 2.2; Ryzewski and Cherry 2015: Fig. 2).

During the second half of the eighteenth century, Montserrat's economic decline was compounded by the dual impact of natural disasters such as drought and disease, and a noticeable rise in social tensions. These conditions led to a failed slave uprising on St. Patrick's Day in 1768 (CO 1768:412/462; McAtackney et al. 2014). In its aftermath, and as threats of revolts continued into the 1790s, the island government imposed increasingly harsh regulations and punishments on the enslaved population (CO

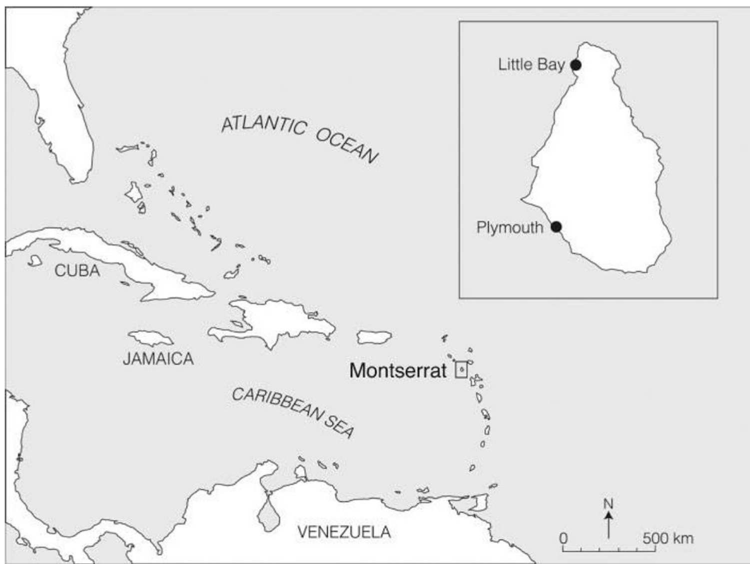

Fig. 1 Map of the Caribbean showing location of Montserrat. Inset map of Montserrat shows former capital city of Plymouth, and new capital city of Little Bay, where Potato Hill is located

1791:101/31). By the early nineteenth century most estates were in the hands of agents who operated on behalf of absentee landlords living in Great Britain. Off-island proprietorship enabled their attorneys to enact changes in landholdings, including gradually merging neighboring sugar estates to increase sugar profits, or converting smaller sugar estates to accommodate grazing cattle and raising provisions.

Emancipation was enacted on Montserrat in 1834. Under apprenticeship Montserrat's former slaves were not immediately freed like their counterparts on neighboring Antigua. Instead, they were required to enter into a system that tied them to estates to which they previously belonged through short-term contracts. The system was, in theory, supposed to provide emancipated laborers with more freedom of movement and to ensure that estate-owners provided continued support in the form of either wages or subsistence (Fergus 1994: 104–112). It did not. By the time the apprenticeship system was abolished by the London parliament early in 1838, the island society had fallen into a state of total disarray. It would take over a generation for Montserrat to begin rebounding economically and socially from the destabilizing aftermath of the emancipation process.

St. Peter's Parish and Potato Hill

Montserrat was divided into four administrative parishes during the early colonial period and these remain in place today: St. Anthony, St. George, St. Patrick, and St. Peter. Until the northward relocation of island residents in the late-1990s as a result of the still-ongoing volcanic crisis, St. Peter's parish was notable as the most sparsely inhabited and resource-poor part of the island. This status extends back centuries to the early colonial period, when, in 1679, government documents refer to the northernmost parish as a "wastland"

(Stapleton 1679 Box 1, Sec 2:5ff). Despite its comparative lack of resources and distance from more substantial settlements in the island's south, St. Peter's parish was an active and strategic colonial landscape. As evidenced by archaeological landscape surveys and archival records, the parish was developed for sugar agriculture, strategic military installations, and trade from the seventeenth century onwards (Ryzewski and Cherry 2015, 2016). Two shallow inlets, Little Bay and Carr's Bay, afforded maritime access to the region, and archival accounts detail the use of these bays by merchants, illegal traders, foreign invaders, and the British military (COC 1842–1845).

In 2013 the Survey and Landscape Archaeology on Montserrat project completed a systematic pedestrian survey of the entirety of St. Peter's parish, documenting over 30 historic-period sites, 10 of which have mid- to late nineteenth-century occupation coinciding with the first generations after emancipation (Cherry et al. 2012). One of these is Potato Hill, a small knoll that separates Little Bay from Carr's Bay (Fig. 2). The site was first identified in 2010 during extensive-tract surveys, which covered approximately the three hectare area. Archaeological evidence suggests that Potato Hill was a settlement nestled between plantation estates, bays, and military posts, from the late seventeenth until the end of the nineteenth century (Ryzewski and Cherry 2016).

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Potato Hill was surrounded by a military installation atop Gun Hill (on the southern edge of Carr's Bay), and multiple sugar estates, including the Little Bay Estate to the east, Rendezvous and Silver Hill Estates to the north, and a number of smaller plantations to the south. From at least the mid-eighteenth century onwards, Potato Hill was not associated with any particular sugar plantation. Its extant remains also do not reflect the presence of sugar processing, industrial production, or the wealth of material culture associated with plantation life encountered in the excavations at the immediately adjacent Little Bay Estate (MacLean 2015). No known historical maps exist that depict structures atop Potato Hill, and only one reference to the hilltop has been located — a passing mention of "Potato Piece" in the 1756 indenture between Mary Gerald and Edmund Akers, which lists quantities of sugar under cultivation there (Indenture 1756). Potato Hill does not appear as a toponym on island maps until the twentieth century. The earliest known photograph of the hilltop, dating to 1900 or 1901, a year after the catastrophic hurricane of 1899, shows Potato Hill overgrown with vegetation and devoid of any structures or other signs of occupation (Sturge Family Papers n.d., Box 1).

Fig. 2 Potato Hill viewed from the southwest. The schoolhouse structure (Feature 16) is located on the eastern side of the hill. Potato Hill separates Carr's Bay (foreground) from Little Bay

The most prominent structural remain atop Potato Hill (Feature 16) is a substantial building constructed during the first generation after emancipation. On the basis of the artifacts recovered during survey and excavation, we suggest it may have functioned, at least in part, as a schoolhouse. In contrast, over the past 5 years we have examined documentary records relating to St. Peter's parish in archival repositories on Montserrat and Antigua, and in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ireland, but no records about the Potato Hill schoolhouse building or it occupants have been located. The unusually rich and diagnostic artifact assemblage positions this site as a revealing example of a social institution associated with the reconstruction process on Montserrat following emancipation, one that has seemingly left a scant official, documentary trail. Before examining the remains from this nineteenth-century structure on Potato Hill, we present archival and archaeological information that contextualizes it against the backdrop of post-emancipation Montserrat and compares it with other archaeological remains of the hilltop settlement.

Montserrat after Emancipation

As Montserratian society tried to transition from a slave-based sugar economy, the British colonial authorities, the local Montserratian government, estate owners, and recently-emancipated laborers collectively struggled with a wide range of social, economic and legal problems — all exacerbated by a devastating earthquake in 1843.

Archival sources from the 1840s through the 1860s reveal how Montserrat's local government consciously diverged from the British government's perspective on how to manage post-emancipation societies in the Caribbean (Berleant-Schiller 2014). The British authorities were steadfastly committed to a future in which recently-emancipated laborers could purchase small plots of land on their former estates in order to build houses, cultivate provision grounds, and continue to serve as wage labor; but the local plantocracy on Montserrat was unwilling to comply with this vision. With the support of local planters, Montserrat's government introduced restrictive laws to curtail the freedom and mobility of laborers. Local records from the period include frequent mentions and court cases involving overseers and agents who illegally administered violent punishments. Further tensions between the colonial and local governments are evident in the British government's outright rejection or emendation of a number of Acts proposed by the Montserrat government that intended to impose harsh restrictions on recently emancipated laborers. One 1843 letter from Downing Street to Sir Charles Fitzroy, President of the Council and Legislative Assembly on Montserrat, ended with this exasperated statement: "I have to add, that it is repugnant in spirit, if not in terms, to the British Statute 5 & 6 Victoria Cap:107, which has already determined that the market for labour shall enjoy freedom, which it appears to be at once the design, and the tendency, of the present enactment to fetter…" (Dispatches from Downing Street 1834-1862). Extant correspondence such as this and other legal case files, provide glimpses of the colonial tensions apparent as deteriorating social and economic conditions on Montserrat's estates in the initial decade post-emancipation took their toll. Despite the intentions of the British government, the conditions faced by emancipated laborers on Montserrat continued to be restrictive and inhumane; they were neglected by absentee estate owners, required to participate in a system of tenancy

that deeply indebted them to overseers, bound them to individual estates, and threatened them with severe legal punishments for minor infractions. The post-emancipation situation on Montserrat was not unique within the Caribbean. Across the region, governments and former plantocracies enacted aggressive tenancy and legal policies that sought to restrict former slaves from accessing the resources necessary to establish independence (e.g. on Antigua, see Rebovich 2011:164, Lightfoot 2015; on Barbados, see Newton 2008).

As Montserratians struggled to construct a new post-emancipation society and economic base the earthquake of 1843 struck, causing catastrophic damage across the island, especially to structures in St. Peter's Parish. In 1844 the British Government granted Montserrat a £23,000 earthquake loan to aid in recovery (Colonial Office 1844), but the funding was insufficient and poorly managed. The loan wound up saddling the island with crippling debt until it was fully repaid in 1873. The earthquake recovery, combined with difficulties re-establishing a profitable post-emancipation agricultural economy, triggered a severe depression between 1846 and 1847. A long letter of 17 June 1848 from Downing Street to Governor Higginson in Antigua notes with regret "the state of decay into which the island has fallen"; the letter goes on to discuss causes of the downturn and "any means of retrieving its affairs" (Dispatches from Downing Street 1834-1862).

Records also provide details about how, during the 1840s and 1850s, estate agents and entrepreneurs made concerted efforts to introduce new agricultural crops to Montserrat in order to counterbalance struggling sugar production and provide cottage-industry employment for the new laboring class. One fascinating example is the attempt between 1839 and 1841 to develop silk-farming – ultimately without success, due both to lack of expertise and the fact that most of the silkworm eggs, laboriously transmitted from Italy with the assistance of the British Government, turned out to be dead on arrival (Letters Book: Out-letters to Montserrat from Antigua 1836-1842). Plans to develop viticulture, coffee, cacao, and olive industries were similarly futile (Colonial Office 1845, 1848). As crops failed to flourish and fetch profits on the market, estate agents could only afford to issue irregular payments to their wage laborers, providing them with little opportunity for financial stability, much less upward mobility. Wages were routinely withheld for periods between 6 and 18 months, or sometimes paid in saltfish, sugar, rum, or molasses instead of currency (Osborn in Colonial Office 1847:123; 1848:228). Colonial government correspondence from 1850 remarks on the "deplorable destitution" of the laboring classes, who, they report, suffered from nakedness and hunger (Colonial Office 1850). An already dire situation of impoverishment was compounded by repeated outbreaks of Yellow Fever during the 1840s, and, in 1849–1850, an island-wide Smallpox epidemic, which was worsened by a lack of medical professionals, shortage of vaccines, and a coinciding 10-month drought (Privy Council 1850, 1859).

The uncertainty and frustration that burdened the laboring class was also felt by the island's hierarchies, who desperately sought ways to relieve the local government from rampant dysfunction. Foreign estate agents were unable to participate in local politics, and high illiteracy rates island-wide meant that, until the mid-1860s, Montserratians were unable to fill the 20 legislative seats and other official positions that were necessary for the local government to function (Colonial Office 1850, 1854, 1865, 1866). An excerpt from the 1850 Montserratian Blue Book reported that, of the island's

population of about 7000, only 111 people above the age of 16 and just 85 above the age of 21, could read or write. These figures translate to a literacy rate of 1–1.5% during the 1840s. By 1861 the proportion of the male population able to read or write did not exceed 15% (Montserratian Blue Book 1850:11; Colonial Office 1861:82). In 1845 and 1857 the inability to populate local government positions led Montserrat's two governing bodies, the Council and the Assembly, to approve petitions for a legislative union with Antigua (Colonial Office 1845, 1857). Antigua rejected Montserrat's proposals, and the local government struggled to function for the next two decades, until an 1866 Act was passed to simplify the island's legislative council and government appointments (Colonial Office 1866).

During these decades of instability, draconian laws remained on the books. For instance, cattle theft and burglary were considered capital felonies on Montserrat, even though such offenses were no longer punishable by death in Britain (Antigua and Barbuda National Archives, File Box 34). Squatting by itinerant laborers and instances of people wandering between estates were perceived as alarming problems of disorderly conduct. Vagrancy and trespassing were crimes deemed punishable by jail sentences much lengthier than those received for identical infractions in neighboring Antigua during the late 1830s (Minute Book 1838), and the frequency with which Montserratian laborers were imprisoned for these offenses put major pressure on already crumbling prison infrastructure. Fear of civil unrest among the laboring classes was at the forefront of legislation and law enforcement during the first three decades post-emancipation; it was noted that 'An Act for preventing Tumults and Riotous Assemblies' was required due to 'the Labouring classes being about to be relieved from the habitual restraint their state of Apprenticeship has hitherto imposed upon them …' (Acts of Montserrat 1838). This unease led to new acts forbidding the assembly of large groups, numerous trespassing cases in court, harsh sentences for petty crimes, establishment of the island's police force, and the government's unwillingness to fund social welfare or improvement schemes for the laboring classes – especially education (Acts of Montserrat 1835–1861).

Education on Montserrat Following Emancipation

Education for the enslaved prior to emancipation was regarded by Montserrat's white plantocracy and local government as socially disruptive, irrelevant, and even inimical to slave society (Fergus 1994). These sentiments were shared across the British Caribbean (Rebovich 2011:169; Reilly 2014). After emancipation local governments made little attempt to improve social welfare for the recently emancipated laboring classes. Official attitudes towards education remained unchanged for decades as authorities prioritized capitalistic agendas (Marshall 2003; Blouet 1990).

Despite resistance from Montserrat's local government, primary education was an important priority for the British colonial government and recently-freed Montserratians alike. As early as 10 July 1837 the Government of Antigua proposed to the Montserrat Legislature the need for a proprietary school, noting that "a great proportion of the rising generation [on Montserrat] are without the means of instruction and are consequently idle and vicious" (Letters Book: Out-letters to Montserrat from Antigua 1836-1842).

Prior to emancipation enslaved children and adults were permitted to attend regular Sunday schools, which were held at churches and on estates across Montserrat. Only one pre-emancipation primary day school existed in Plymouth, and this institution would have catered to free rather than enslaved children (Montserratian Blue Book 1830). Primary day schools proliferated across the island after the apprenticeship system ended in 1838. Methodist missionary Jonathan Cadman opened the first such school at Cavalla Hill, St. Peter's parish in 1838 (Berleant-Schiller 2014:57). This 50-student co-educational school introduced basic formal instruction in writing, reading, scripture, and mathematics, and aimed to instill both Methodist and English ideals of respectability and moral behavior among the new laboring class of black and mixed-race children (Colonial Office 1854; cf. Olwig 1990; the Cavalla Hill school is the longest continuously-operating school on Montserrat and it remains active today).

As on other British islands, almost all of Montserrat's schools during the first two generations post-emancipation were affiliated with either the Anglican or Methodist churches. One Roman Catholic school also existed on Montserrat during the second half of the nineteenth century, but its enrollment figures were not as dutifully reported as the other schools in annual Blue Book statistics (Colonial Statistics 1869). Indeed, allegations were made to Downing Street by Fr. McMahon, the Roman Catholic priest in the island in the mid-nineteenth century, that the Assembly was deliberately withholding funds to enable the church and its associates to function (Correspondence on Montserrat 1849). Similarly, other private, home-based, and non-affiliated schools existed on an intermittent basis, but mention of these rarely appears in official records.

Post-emancipation education on Montserrat was neither compulsory nor free. Between 1838 and 1867 Montserrat's Anglican and Methodist schools were funded exclusively by English charitable and religious institutions, including the Church of England, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, the Lady Mico Charity, the Ladies' Society for Educating the Children of Negroes in the West Indies, and the Christian Faith Society (Montserratian Blue Book 1849; Berleant-Schiller 2014:57). Private donations and tuition payments from parents were also required to support local schools; in 1845 the tuition at Cavalla Hill was £1 per student, per annum (Montserratian Blue Book 1845). Parents were also expected to furnish students with the materials necessary for their school work (e.g., writing tablets, pencils, appropriate clothing; Colonial Office 1854).

The proliferation of schools on Montserrat after 1838 clearly indicates that a strong desire for primary education existed among recently emancipated laborers. The number of day schools on Montserrat dramatically increased from one in 1838 to 17 in 1840, just 2 years after the end of apprenticeship (Fig. 3). Missionaries and Mico institutions trained and funded teachers for the schools, the majority of whom were women (Montserratian Blue Book 1839). For the next six decades Montserrat had an average of 11 religious-affiliated day-schools operating island-wide.

Initially, in the 1840s, several primary day schools emerged on sugar estates. Many of these estates hosted Sunday schools prior to emancipation, including Whites, Tar River, Farrells, Roaches, Morris', Brodericks, and Galways (Montserratian Blue Books 1830, 1839, 1848). By 1858 only two schools remained on working sugar estates, Brodericks (31 students) and Galways (104 students) (Montserratian Blue Book 1858). These numbers illustrate how, over the course of the first generation post-emancipation, schools shifted away from estates to village centers and local churches in a trend that is

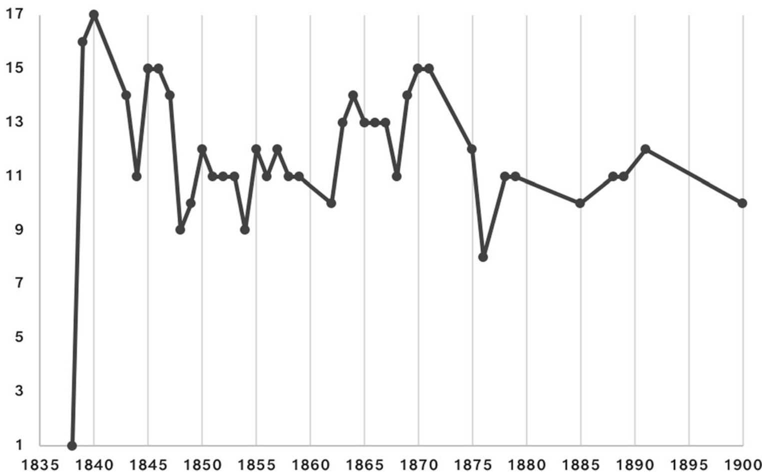

Fig. 3 Number of day-schools on Montserrat, 1838–1900 (Data compiled from available Montserratian Blue Book statistics)

reflective of the broader demographic movements of the island's population. Between 1839 and 1874 either five or six of the island's recorded schools operated in St. Peter's Parish — which means around half of Montserrat's schools were located in the island's least populous region (Table 1). In St. Peter's Parish four schools were associated with the Church of England: St. Peter's Church, St. John's Chapel (also referred to as Old Northwards or Rose Hill), Glebe, and Sweeney's. Two Wesleyan Methodist schools at Cavalla Hill and Salem also operated there (Colonial Office 1854:129; Montserratian Blue Books 1839–1874). In 1869, all but one school on Montserrat was open year-round, and colonial officials commented how "the intelligence of the children is strongly marked" (Colonial Statistics 1869). Records and oral histories note that during the second half of the nineteenth century all of the island's primary schools were co-educational, although most had an average of 5–10 more girls than boys enrolled; the schools educated children between the ages of 5 and 12.

Despite the widespread interest in education among the new laboring class, Montserrat's post-emancipation society continued to be tied to the production of sugar, an industry whose survival relied in part upon the labor of school-aged children. Competition between social welfare and capitalist interests meant that civil support for educational institutions and the reform of local labor systems would take at least two generations to emerge (cf. Carter 2012 for Barbados). As early as 1854, the British government began to urge Montserrat's local legislature to fund education. But their requests continually fell on deaf ears, even though Montserrat's legislature, whose own functioning was hampered by poor literacy among the island elite, also stood to benefit from improved schooling. In the absence of government support for local education, between 1840 and 1875 schools were frequently closed during times of economic hardship or disease outbreak, and there were no standards in place for curriculum standardization, teacher evaluation, or testing (Colonial Office 1850, 1867, 1870).

It took 29 years, from the opening of the first day-school for laborers' children at Cavalla Hill in 1838 until 1867, for the Montserratian government to invest in local education. In 1867 the government invested £50 in schooling (Montserratian Blue

Table 1 Average number of enrolled students at St. Peter's parish schools, 1839–1874 (Data compiled from Blue Books)

		1839	1840–1844	1845–1849	1850–1854	1855–1859	1860–1864	1865–1868	1874
Near St. Peter's Church	Church of England	74	61	48	66	60	77	82	121
Glebe	Church of England	63	41	34	61	51	62	53	89
Sweeney's	Church of England	27	38 (closed 1843)						
St. John's Chapel / Old Northwards / Rose Hill	Church of England		30 (opened 1843)	46	47	46	34	40	54
Salem	Wesleyan	40	21 (closed 1841/42)	31 (closed 1848/49)	closed	closed	33 (re-opened 1863)	38	77
Cavalla Hill	Wesleyan	40	68	49 (closed 1848/49)	37	30	53	33	125

Book 1867). The subsidy was increased to £100 in 1870, but only those schools with more than 20 students in regular attendance were eligible for funding (Montserratian Blue Book 1870). Despite modest government support, schools on Montserrat in the 1860s and 1870s continued to struggle with attendance, teacher recruitment, and curriculum standards. A major turning point in Caribbean primary education was the passage of the Federal Education Act in 1874, which was implemented on Montserrat in 1875. The Act brought all Leeward Island schools under the supervision of an inspector. The inspector's unannounced annual examination of schools assessed students, teachers, and curriculum. His observations were the basis upon which individual school funding was allocated (Montserratian Blue Book 1875). During the initial years of inspections, between 1875 and 1877, Montserrat's schools were described as existing in a "backward state"; in 1875 only seven of the island's 12 schools received funding, and in 1877 schools were described as in a "far from satisfactory condition", owing especially to the irregular and uncertain attendance of students, who were occupied by agricultural duties (Colonial Office 1875). During this period, in 1875, Joseph Sturge VII, a Quaker and citrus-lime planter opened a non-denominational school for laborers who worked on his family-run plantations, which operated under the management of The Montserrat Company Ltd. (The Montserrat Company was the island's largest landowner at the time). The subsequent success of the Olveston school, as reported by annual Blue Books and inspectors' reports, is an indication of how important popular education had become for the laboring class, and also how it was increasingly accepted by estate managers and the government.

Compulsory education was instituted on Montserrat in 1890, and with it came regulations that aimed to standardize primary schools (Colonial Office 1890:15). Although the Compulsory Education Act required all children in the Leeward Islands between the ages of 5 and 12 to enroll in schools, education was still not free on Montserrat. In the same year, Montserrat's first secondary school, catering to boys only, was opened. The effects of compulsory education on Montserrat resulted in the largest increase of student attendance (127%) in the region (Colonial Office 1897). The extent to which education had developed into an essential resource for all classes is evidenced by the government's recovery priorities after the Hurricane of 1899: schools were the first public institutions to receive funds for repair (Montserratian Blue Book 1900).

The Archaeological Landscape of Potato Hill

Against this backdrop of social and educational conditions on Montserrat, we now turn to the archaeological evidence. Archaeological investigations on Potato Hill began in 2010 with documentation of extant structural remains, water catchment features, and surface artifact scatter during extensive pedestrian surveys of the hilltop, and over the course of 6 years some 12,696 artifacts have been recovered from the hilltop (Ryzewski et al. 2017; see Table 2).

In 2013 the westernmost third of the hill was cleared of vegetation in advance of a commercial development initiative. This afforded the opportunity for systematic recovery of surface remains within a gridded survey area of 103 10 × 10 m squares. Visible features were recorded and all surface artifacts were collected within each grid square. The surface survey produced a total of 4160 artifacts, the majority ranging in date from

Table 2 Total artifact quantities and corresponding dates for each survey and excavation area on Potato Hill

	Artifact Count	Percent of Total	Date Range
Gridded Surface Survey (2013)	4160	32%	late prehistoric to early nineteenth century
Shovel Test Pits of Structures (2013–2015)	134	1%	17th and 18th centuries
Eighteenth-Century Structure Excavations (Feature 298, 2015–2016)	1418	12%	mid-late eighteenth century
Nineteenth-Century Structure Excavations (Feature 16, 2015–2016)	6984	55%	mid-late nineteenth century
Total	12,696	100%	

the late seventeenth century until the early nineteenth century, as well as six discrete concentrations of artifacts and remains of small domestic structures occupied between the late seventeenth and late eighteenth century (Ryzewski and Cherry 2013). One of these structures (Feature 298) on the west side of the hill was excavated in 2015–16 and proved to be a substantial 4 × 9 m dwelling of eighteenth-century date (Brace et. al 2015; Ellens et al. 2016). Of the total assemblage of 1418 artifacts, 61% was comprised of pottery, containing a minimum of 81 vessels (75% European-produced, especially undecorated creamware, and 25% local or regionally-produced coarseware vessels). The assemblage also contained numerous personal items, including beads, jewelry, and buttons, as well as modified pottery and metal fragments that were intentionally cut, punctured, or shaped to function as decorative, gaming, and/or trading pieces; metal objects and faunal remains were less abundant in this assemblage. In short, and as discussed at greater length elsewhere (Ryzewski and Cherry 2016), these survey and excavation finds document the use of the hilltop as a site of repeated small-scale settlement for centuries.

A Forgotten Schoolhouse on Potato Hill?

Towards the eastern edge of Potato Hill, by contrast, our research team located structural remains (Feature 16) and substantial surface artifact scatter, with mid-nineteenth-century materials that — as argued below — suggest that this building was used, at least in part, as a schoolhouse during the initial post-emancipation decades. Excavation of this building occupied two field seasons in 2015 and 2016 and produced 6984 artifacts from nine trenches (Fig. 4).

The building's architecture shows it to be a large, sturdy stone-founded structure whose ground-level footprint measured 5 × 7 m. A substantial quantity of disarticulated architectural stone rubble was scattered around the edges of the structure, suggesting that its foundation walls were originally a meter or more in height; the extant rubble-filled and mortared stone walls measured 80 cm in width, with flat stones on both the interior and exterior faces. Inside the building, an inset stone step, running along the northern and southern walls and elevated 35 cm from the base of the stone wall, may have served to anchor wooden floorboards, or perhaps may have functioned as inbuilt

Fig. 4 Aerial view of the foundation of Feature 16, the schoolhouse structure at Potato Hill. The map outlines the location of excavation trenches in 2015 and 2016

bench seating for the building's pupils. No comparable schoolhouse sites have been documented by archaeologists in the Caribbean, however the Potato Hill structure's dimensions fit well within the range of the 19 mid- to late-nineteenth-century schoolhouses in Maryland surveyed by archaeologists Gibb and Beisaw, who estimated structures with comparable dimensions accommodated between 50 and 75 students (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:111,121).

Along the exterior walls of the building's stone foundation were uncovered eight postholes placed about 40 cm from the exterior walls, each measuring 20–30 cm in diameter. Each posthole was dug into the underlying bedrock to a depth of 10–30 cm below the ground surface, and one was stone-lined. They would have supported substantial load-bearing vertical wooden timbers. Based on comparative examination of vernacular architectural styles on Montserrat, including the former Great Houses at the Trants and Farm Estates, the structure on Potato Hill appears to have been a vernacular building in the "skirt and blouse" style, consisting of a stone-built ground floor (or crawlspace), and an elevated wood-framed structure above. Large vertical timbers placed in the postholes would have supported a second story, and perhaps also an overhanging roof or room, affording a shaded space beneath. The architectural evidence from the schoolhouse structure suggests that the original building contained a minimum of two large rooms on the ground level, and one-and-a-half or two stories above.

In addition to the rectangular building remains, a stone-lined patio or platform, which may have been covered by a wooden porch superstructure, ran along the southern exterior of the building. Its placement suggests that the building's front originally faced southward, towards the small settlements at Carr's Bay, Davy Hill, Geralds, and Brades Estate. Mechanisms for an iron-latched gate and large cut stones to support it were excavated near the northeast corner of the structure. These remains

indicate another access point to the building, as well as the occupants' desire to control building access and perhaps to separate them from the livestock that probably shared the hilltop. No window glass or roof shingles (slate or ceramic) were recovered, and their absence suggests that the structure had a thatched roof and open-air windows, common features of Montserratian architecture at the time (Colonial Office 1878). Immediately west of the structure are the remains of two water-catchment features: a large rock-cut cistern, 2.8 m in diameter, and a large waterstone with a bowl-shaped depression that would have captured rainwater for consumption or use in daily chores. These were important water management features in an area of the island with no natural freshwater sources close by (cf. Hauser 2017).

Assemblage Analysis

Three strata were observed throughout the excavation area, each differentiated by soil color and texture. One oval-shaped midden pit feature measuring approximately 1 × 1.5 m was excavated in the southwest corner of the structure. Overall, the excavations of the schoolhouse structure produced 6984 individual finds, the majority of which were fauna (54%), followed by metal (15%), ceramics (14%), other historic materials (9%), and glass (8%). The most popular ceramic types in the assemblage were whiteware varieties (60%), followed by coarseware (18%). The distribution of artifact types in the schoolhouse assemblage stands in strong contrast to those from a century earlier excavated from Feature 298 nearby, suggesting minimal continuity between the functions or occupants of the two structures.

Ceramics were identified by ware type, decorative elements, and vessel form. From the 977 ceramic sherds in the schoolhouse assemblage, a minimum of 214 vessels have been identified. Forty-one percent of them were of indeterminate shapes, owing to the number of decorated body sherds without diagnostic morphological elements in the vessel count (e.g., base, rim). Of the identifiable forms, 39% were hollowware, primarily bowls, cups, and service vessels; teaware was less common (Table 3). Seventy-six percent of the identified vessels were decorated (Table 4). Transfer-printed decorations were the most common (31%), and included blue, green, red/pink, brown, black, and purple designs. Other decorative treatments included dipped or engine-turned industrial slip (14.5%), hand painting (9%), and sponge decoration (7%), the vast majority on whiteware pottery, whose presence in Montserrat post-dates 1820.

Table 3 Distribution of minimum vessels and vessel forms from feature 16, potato hill, by stratigraphic context. Eighteen of the of 214 vessels were coarseware (8.4%)

	Stratum 1	Stratum 2	Stratum 3	Midden (Feature 3)	Total Number of Vessels	Percent of Total
Flatware	14	18	7	4	43	20%
Hollowware	12	31	19	21	83	39%
Indeterminate	23	24	10	31	88	41%
Total Minimum Number of Vessels	49	73	36	56	214	

Table 4 decorative pottery types by stratigraphic contexts. Quantities are based on minimum vessel counts ($n = 214$)

	Transfer Printed	Hand Painted	Sponge Decorated	Industrial Slipware or Dipped	Other	None
Stratum 1	15	7	5	7	4	11
Stratum 2	22	9	5	8	14	15
Stratum 3	9	1	1	6	5	14
Midden (Feature 3)	21	3	3	10	8	11
Total Number of Vessels	67	20	14	31	31	51
% Total	31%	9%	7%	14.5%	14.5%	24%

Despite the popularity of decorated ceramics in the Potato Hill schoolhouse assemblage, matching sets were uncommon in the assemblage. This trend is consistent with ceramics recovered from other post-emancipation settlements at nearby Drummonds, Rendezvous Bluff, and Rendezvous Village, and it most likely reflects a combination of the piecemeal market availability of European pottery and the particular preferences of Montserratian consumers during this period (Ryzewski and Cherry 2016). Overall, this ceramic assemblage was primarily composed of dining and food service vessels (e.g. plates, bowls), as opposed to food preparation, storage, or other types of specialty containers. Three exceptions were a large, shallow, redware milk pan, a stoneware bottle, and an undecorated whiteware chamber pot. The relative lack of ceramic cooking vessels is probably offset by the quantity of iron pot fragments recovered at the site, which indicate that food preparation activities may have necessitated larger and more robust kitchenware. The rarity of ceramic storage containers in the assemblage may mean that meals were served in a capacity that did not require or have access to surplus ingredients.

Dating the Structure

Initial clues about the date of the possible schoolhouse structure were based on the recovery of three diagnostic pottery sherds, all from whiteware vessels, from the soil underneath the building's stone foundation walls (Fig. 5). The first was a plate fragment with pink transfer-printed decoration, which had a general manufacturing date range between 1829 and 1880; the floral pattern on the plate was most popular between 1833 and 1849 (Samford 1997:6). The second sherd recovered from the foundation wall was from a scalloped or shell-edged whiteware plate with a lightly-impressed feathered pattern and green band around the rim; this style of edged-ware was most common in the 1820s and 1830s (Miller 1991). The third diagnostic sherd was a body fragment from a whiteware bowl with blue and black engine-turned slipped annular lines on its exterior; this type of vessel was manufactured on pearlware and whiteware between 1785 and 1890, and its popularity as a whiteware variety peaked in the 1840s (Miller 1991; Sussman 1997). Although the manufacturing dates of these three pottery vessels

Fig. 5 Artifacts recovered from the Potato Hill schoolhouse excavations include (clockwise from top left): mid- to late nineteenth-century pottery, circular tokens modified from broken pottery, toys (marbles, dolls, and figurines), and a variety of buttons

span a broad temporal range, based on their peak popularity in the 1830s and 1840s and their in situ association with the bottom of the structure's foundation wall, we can reasonably infer that the building was constructed after the earthquake of 1843, which obliterated many standing buildings in St. Peter's Parish. If the Potato Hill structure was erected post-earthquake, as the artifacts suggest, then its robust stone architecture also likely reflects a conscious effort to construct a sturdy, durable building in the wake of the recent disaster.

Artifact analysis revealed that diagnostic pottery and other objects with production dates beginning in the mid-nineteenth century spanned all three strata. Twenty-six ceramic buttons manufactured using the Prosser process were recovered from the interior of the structure. These white buttons were manufactured in England beginning in 1840 and were popular throughout the nineteenth century (Sprague 2002). Twelve "BEST RING EDGE" copper-alloy buttons, whose manufacture began in the mid-1850s, were also recovered from all three stratigraphic levels, indicating that the soil deposits did not correlate to discrete phases of the site's usage, but rather suggested continuous use of the space. Other artifacts that assist in dating the structure's activities include a McDougall pipe stem from Glasgow, which was first produced in 1846, a Perry Davis' Vegetable Painkiller bottle, whose embossed rectangular panel design debuted by 1855, and a glass marble, whose production began in 1846 (Randall and Webb 1988:2; Daily American Organ 1855:4; Ryzewski et al. 2017). Artifactual evidence clearly indicates that the building was in use after the 1843 earthquake, and, as previously noted, photographic evidence confirms that the structure was no longer standing by around 1900. The frequency of artifacts with manufacturing ranges or peak market popularities between 1850 and 1860 suggests that the structure was active during this timeframe, although issues of time-lag introduced by interruptions in trans-Atlantic commerce during the1850s and the fact that most of these products continued to be manufactured into the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, do not afford a precise window for

the site's occupation. Details from archival sources, but, offer a narrower occupational period (Colonial Office 1855:185).

Artifacts of Education

The structure at Potato Hill is not listed as a schoolhouse in official Blue Book records from the mid-nineteenth century, which reported annual statistics of church-run and Wesleyan Methodist missionary schools. Nevertheless, the artifacts from the structure strongly suggest that the occupants of the building included children who were involved in educational activities geared towards literacy, as well as training for domestic service and agricultural husbandry. Here, we review the material culture recovered from the excavation that informs our interpretation of one of the building's functions as a mid-nineteenth century schoolhouse (cf. Agbe-Davies and Martin 2013 for the multiple uses of schoolhouses in nineteenth century New Philadelphia, Illinois; and Burton and Baxter 2018). The identity of this Potato Hill building is presented in tandem with archival information and oral history-based insights into schooling on Montserrat in the following section.

Some 198 "special finds" were recovered (Fig. 6). Of this assemblage, 20% (40) of the artifacts were fragments of lined slate writing tablets (11) and slate pencils (29), occurring in all stratigraphic levels (Fig. 7). The absence of inkwells and other types of writing utensils, suggests that these slates were standard pedagogical tools that students used to learn writing, reading, and arithmetic, three of the subjects routinely taught in Montserrat's post-emancipation day-schools. Local oral histories confirm the ubiquity of slate tablets and pencils in Montserratian primary schools well into the mid-twentieth century, which were likely used in daily writing and arithmetic lessons.

Also present in the assemblage were six toys: parts of two porcelain dolls, the head of a porcelain goose figurine, and two marbles (one glass and one clay) (Fig. 5). In a period marked by scarcity and impoverishment, it can only be assumed these

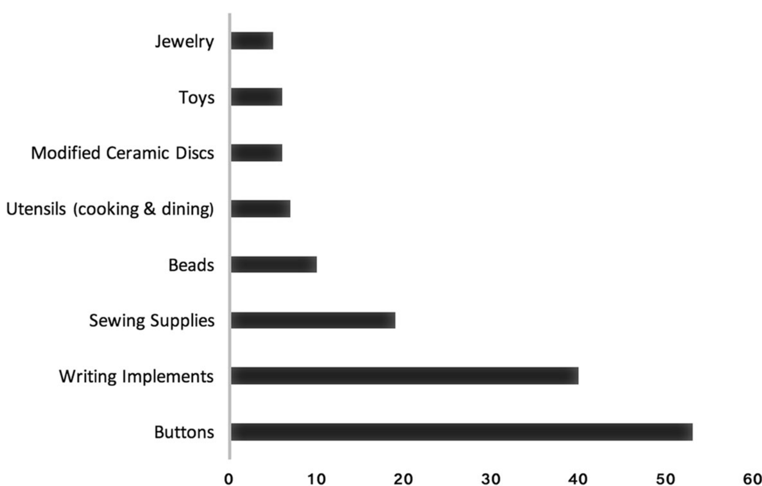

Fig. 6 Distribution of special finds excavated from the schoolhouse at Potato Hill, grouped by major artifact categories ($n = 147$ out of 198). Writing implements include slate tablets and pencils

Fig. 7 Fragments of 11 slate writing tablets and 29 pencils recovered from the schoolhouse excavations at Potato Hill

manufactured toys would have been treasured by the children who played with them. Other indications of homemade toys are present in six circular tokens, refashioned into discs from broken pottery. Montserratian oral traditions recount a popular game called "Chiney Money", which was a dice-like contest that involved tossing three discs made from broken pottery onto a surface (Pulispher 1997:313). One side of the game piece was decorated and the other was not; points were calculated according to the number of pieces whose decorations landed upright. These six modified ceramics each have decorations on only one face, thus making them suitable as game pieces. Other folklore from the region conveys that modified circular ceramic pieces were used as the base for fabric-covered buttons (Ryzewski and Cherry 2016). Given that modified ceramic discs are common finds on historic-period sites in Montserrat's north, it is probable that broken ceramics were used for gaming, but also repurposed for a variety of other household and informal economic purposes in this remote region of the island (MacLean 2015). The potential use of the modified ceramics as gaming pieces and button bases fits well within the realm of the daily activities within this structure on Potato Hill, if indeed it was a schoolhouse.

As with other known primary schools on the island, lessons at the Potato Hill schoolhouse probably focused on literacy, basic mathematics, and recitation. Artifacts and local oral historical accounts also reveal that the young female and male pupils devoted some time to learning the skills required to perform domestic service: sewing, tailoring, cooking, and home maintenance. Older Montserratians recall that their great-

grandparents learned basic sewing, cooking, and agricultural skills in primary school. Existing archaeological studies of sewing practices are consistent with these oral traditions; they note that in nineteenth-century North American charity schools, students were taught to sew as early as age five (Beaudry 2006:105). Sewing supplies, buttons, and beads comprised 42% of the special finds assemblage from the Potato Hill structure. The nineteen artifacts classified as sewing and clothing implements included seven copper alloy thimbles (with signs of wear), six eyelets, three buckles, and a clasp, hook, and a copper alloy straight pin. During the mid- to late nineteenth century inexpensive copper alloy thimbles were commonly produced for, and used by, children; they would outgrow them quickly and share them with one another (Beaudry 2006).

In addition to sewing equipment, fifty-three buttons were recovered from the interior of the structure (Fig. 5). Varieties of bone, brass, shell, fabric, ceramic, and copper-alloy buttons were all present in the assemblage; forty-four of the buttons were either ceramic, made by the Prosser process (26), or copper alloy (18). It is unlikely that the buttons in the assemblage belonged exclusively to garments worn by the school children, since records from 1850 made a point to comment on how poorly dressed the children were (Colonial Office 1850). In fact, most of the buttons were complete and exhibited minimal wear, indicating that they were probably accidentally dropped during sewing tasks rather than dislocated from clothing. Of particular interest are the twelve four-holed copper-alloy buttons molded with the generic slogan “BEST RING EDGE” and a single copper alloy button labeled “BEST SOLID EYELET” (Ryzewski et al. 2017). These buttons were manufactured in abundance in England from the mid-1850s onwards, and were designed for work clothing (Lindbergh 1999:52). “BEST RING EDGE” buttons appear in colonial British archaeological contexts worldwide, including at missionary and military sites in nineteenth-century Australia (Paterson 2008:90; Lydon 2009:140). These buttons are often associated with military trousers, but they were also commonly used on men’s work trousers as fly, waist, or suspender fasteners, as well as on the waists of women’s underskirts and on gaiters. Designed for durability, “BEST RING EDGE” buttons were inexpensive and widely available. Similarly, ceramic buttons manufactured by the Prosser process were the most ubiquitous and cheapest buttons available in nineteenth-century North America and Great Britain (Sprague 2002). The majority of the 26 ceramic buttons recovered from the Potato Hill structure were four-hole sew-through varieties, and the remainder were two-hole sew-through. Sprague (2002:112, 123) details how four-hole Prosser buttons were typically used on shirts, while two-hole varieties were fasteners on trousers. Prosser-process buttons were also manufactured with three holes, and these were typically used on children’s clothing (Sprague 2002:124). No three-holed ceramic buttons were recovered from the Potato Hill assemblage. This absence signals that sewing activities were probably focused on mending adult garments, a task that Afro-Caribbean laborers commonly performed during the slavery era (cf. Reilly 2016:333; Galle 2010; Heath 1999; Jorden 2005). In general, the prevalence of ceramic and mass-produced copper-alloy buttons in the nineteenth-century assemblage at Potato Hill suggests modest improvement in the extent to which Montserrat’s new laboring class was able to incorporate these inexpensive buttons into their workwear during the post-emancipation period.

Eleven beads, representing a variety of forms and materials, were also excavated, including: tubular red ceramic (2), tubular blue glass (1), round white shell (2), round

blue glass (2), round black glass (1), and light blue seed beads (3). Hitherto, beads have been rare finds on Montserrat's historic period sites, and in Caribbean archaeological contexts they are often interpreted as items of personal adornment or trade (Wilkie 2000). Blue beads in particular have been associated by archaeologists with Afro-Caribbean communities, who wore or used them in recognition of their spiritual, magical, and ritualistic properties (Stine et al. 1996; Schroedl and Ahlman 2002; Handler 2009). In the context of Potato Hill, where artifacts suggest that sewing and tailoring activities were part of the school's pedagogical training, it is possible that the schoolhouse's occupants were adding beads as embellishments onto the clothing or other objects they crafted. But given the rarity of these finds and their history of symbolic usage in the region, it is also probable that at least some of the beads may have been personal effects belonging to teachers, students or other laborers associated with the institution. In such instances, where the building's occupants were almost certainly of African descent, the beads could be interpreted as evidence of continuity of Afro-Caribbean adornment and spiritual practices in a post-emancipation setting that at least superficially encouraged alignment with a British system of social and religious education. Similarly, the presence of modified ceramics and other repurposed objects made from glass and chert in the Potato Hill assemblage demonstrates the continuation of material culture modification practices from the slavery era into the post-emancipation period (see Ryzewski and Cherry 2016 for a discussion of modified and repurposed artifacts in eighteenth-century Montserrat).

Further evidence of domestic activities, and/or training for work in domestic service and cottage industries, appears in the remains of a clothing iron, a wood-handled cleaning brush, a redware milk pan, iron cookware and serving utensils, and a blacking bottle. The stoneware blacking bottle is particularly interesting because, as described by Schrire (2014:167, 171), it would have contained a black ink that was used to protect and polish cast iron stoves, as well as to waterproof and clean leather (the latter the probable use at Potato Hill). An identical bottle recovered by archaeologists in English Harbour on neighboring Antigua is on display at the Nelson's Dockyard museum.

As noted above, primary school education was not compulsory on Montserrat until 1890 and therefore reported school enrollment figures were drastically different than the actual daily attendance (Colonial Office 1848, 1852, 1877). In the 1877 Colonial Office Records, the Federal Inspector for Schools commented that "attendance is irregular and uncertain [on Montserrat], and there must be a large number of children who never attend." At the time, Montserratians enlisted children from the age of seven in agricultural and stock-breeding duties, which often took them away from school (ibid.). In an effort to improve daily attendance and to increase the relevance of the school's training for future laborers, in the late 1840s colonial authorities encouraged teachers to combine "literal and industrial training" by including hands-on lessons in agricultural husbandry (Higginson, in Colonial Office 1847:121). As a result, some schools incorporated land and animals in yards next to schoolhouses. The abundant faunal evidence suggests that the occupants of the Potato Hill schoolhouse may have been involved in raising or procuring local animal resources, for immediate consumption and perhaps also for processing and redistribution on the local market. Over half (54%) of the Potato Hill schoolhouse's assemblage is comprised of faunal remains. As Ohman (2016) reports in her analysis of the faunal assemblage, a wide variety of domestic animals and local tropical fish and mollusks were consumed (and possibly

processed) by the hilltop occupants. Sheep/goat and pig were the most common animals, followed by a lesser number of cows, and the presence of deciduous teeth and unfused bones indicates that younger animals were being consumed. Intriguing corroborating evidence of localized husbandry practices includes the presence of eggshells, perhaps from chickens kept on the premises. Evidence of a gate and fencing around the schoolhouse may suggest the desire to keep animals away from the structure's immediate vicinity. The Potato Hill faunal assemblage also contained numerous fish taxa, including parrotfish, all of which were local to Montserratian reefs. Reef fishing would have required nets or traps, and lead net weights recovered by excavations confirm that occupants were engaged in such practices.

Finally, there exist several unique personal finds in the assemblage that show some measure of differentiation among individuals within the schoolhouse, especially between adults and children. These include a brass ring with cross-hatched designs, a wooden styling comb, a necklace pendant, and a dangling earring for a pierced ear; the latter three objects were most likely associated with a woman's wardrobe, and the ring was sized to fit a small adult finger. In the absence of documentary records identifying the schoolhouse teachers or support staff, these objects cannot be matched to a particular individual, although they do confirm that at least one adult woman was active in this space.

Identifying the Potato Hill Schoolhouse

Extensive archival research has failed thus far to locate the name or association of a schoolhouse on Potato Hill. However, the wide range of diagnostic artifacts discussed above strongly suggest that the structure functioned at least in part as a schoolhouse, and that it was most active during the 1850s and 1860s. Other clues in the records corroborate this occupational timeframe. Thus far, we are able to suggest two possible interpretations about the Potato Hill schoolhouse: (1) it was occupied when another school in the parish was temporarily closed, and (2) it was a privately-run facility that did not receive funding from religious or charity groups, and therefore eluded annual official recordkeeping.

Examination of annual school reports revealed that five schools functioned continuously in St. Peter's Parish, with temporary interruptions, between 1838 and 1874 (Sweeney's schoolhouse was closed in 1843; Table 1). The one exception was the Methodist school at Salem, which was officially closed due to lack of funds between 1848 and 1863. During the closure period, the only other Methodist school in St. Peter's was at Cavalla Hill. Between 1845 and 1848 the average enrollment at Cavalla Hill was 49 students, compared to 31 at Salem school (Montserratian Blue Books 1840–1849). In the 1850s, after the closure of Salem school, the enrollment at Cavalla Hill *decreased* to an average of 37 students between 1850 and 1854 and 30 between 1855 and 1859. These numbers suggest that the students from the Salem school did not enroll at Cavalla Hill *en masse* when their school closed in 1848. Another anomaly appears in descriptions of the school at St. John's Chapel, which between 1856 and 1865 is alternatively described as Old Northwards and Rose Hill, before it once again appears as St. John's school in 1866 (Montserratian Blue Books 1856–1866). It is possible that the school at St. John's Chapel was relocated temporarily during the late

1850s, although given the consistency in teachers' names and enrollment figures, it is equally likely that record-keepers interchanged toponyms and the nearest estate (Old Northwards) with the school's location in the village of St. John's. Given that the schoolhouse at Potato Hill contains an artifact assemblage that dates broadly between the 1850s and 1860s, it is possible that the structure served as a schoolhouse for students who were displaced by the closure of the Salem school between 1848 and 1863, and perhaps also during other shorter-term closures of regional schools at the time.

A second possibility is that the schoolhouse at Potato Hill functioned as a private school that did not receive official charity or church funding. Records indicate that one unnamed private school operated during the first half of the 1860s, with 31 male and 36 female children enrolled in 1860 (Colonial Office, 1860: 65; 1866). From the eighteenth through the twentieth century, the villages in the vicinity of Potato Hill were primarily inhabited by the extensive Piper, Allen, and Gerald families. It is conceivable that these families managed a small, local school in their fairly remote district, possibly in a space that also served additional functions. Privately-managed schools are not as systematically recorded in the colonial records as religious schools, but their existence on the island is indicated by entries in the Blue Books of the 1860s and in a passing reference within the 1893 Colonial Office Records, which mandated that Montserrat's private schools were to be placed under government supervision and licensed for the first time. The Compulsory Education Act of 1890 had previously required similar standards for the island's religiously-affiliated schools and the Montserrat Company's Olveston school. In the absence of more detailed historical records, these two scenarios about the identity of the Potato Hill schoolhouse remain speculative.

Conclusion

The immediate decades after emancipation introduced harsh new restrictions and few material advantages to the island's recently-freed laboring class. Lingering prejudices persisted after emancipation and are reflected in the uneven development of Montserrat's educational system between 1838 and 1900. The local government's initial disregard for education is but one of many social welfare issues that were maligned while officials reluctantly and only gradually reconciled policies from the slavery era with the demands of a new society. These conditions eventually stimulated labor and social movements among local populations across the Caribbean in the latter decades of the nineteenth century (Carter 2012). On Montserrat, archival and archaeological evidence clearly shows the extent to which the island's adult laboring class were eager to invest in a better future for their children by encouraging education immediately after emancipation. Their willingness to support primary-level instruction continued through the remainder of the nineteenth century, despite experiencing tremendous economic hardships, government resistance, and little hope for upward mobility during their own lifetime. The resilience of the new laboring class over the next 35 years ensured that by the 1890s primary education finally became an essential rite of passage for all of the island's children, as well as a cornerstone of its new post-emancipation society.

No other examples of schoolhouses have been located archaeologically on Montserrat or published based on comparable research elsewhere in the Caribbean Lesser

Antilles. The Potato Hill schoolhouse is, therefore, an important baseline for future studies of educational institutions in the region and the gradual processes of change associated with Caribbean societies after emancipation. In general, historical archaeological understandings of post-emancipation transformations are underdeveloped, in part because they were so variable from island-to-island (Ryzewski forthcoming). Material provision for education is one area that might facilitate comparative research into emergent social institutions during the second half of the nineteenth century.

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