



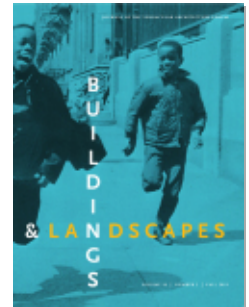
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"Until the Lord Come Get Me, It Burn Down, Or the Next Storm
Blow It Away": The Aesthetics of Freedom in African American
Vernacular Homestead Preservation

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“Until the Lord Come Get Me, It Burn Down, Or the Next Storm Blow It Away”

The Aesthetics of Freedom in African American Vernacular Homestead Preservation

ABSTRACT

Angel David Nieves and Leslie M. Alexander’s *We Shall Independent Be* (2008), which contemplated the relationship between American ideals such as freedom and black space creation, advanced the validity of vernacular African American placemaking and architecture as a by-product of protest, cultural expression, and intentional design. Despite this, few scholars have focused on related rural African American building and preservation practices as expressions of a continuous freedom struggle and diasporic search for home. Through observation of African American grassroots preservationists, this essay argues for increased attention to rural grassroots homestead preservation. From 1865 to 1920, former slaves founded more than 557 “freedom colonies” across Texas. Ethnographic and archival research conducted within Newton County freedom colonies demonstrates that descendants, regardless of residency status, have sustained place attachments and nurtured stewardship of homesteads through heritage conservation, rehabilitation, and family property retention. Rehabilitation activities in two settlements, Shankleville and Pleasant Hill, show the relationship between intangible heritage and descendants’ landscape stewardship practices. The concept, called here the homeplace aesthetic, illuminates descendants’ preservation methods, resilience strategies, and stylistic preferences as unrecognized dimensions of significance and integrity. The concept of a homeplace aesthetic also explains descendants’ concurrent negotiation—through subversion and assimilation—of the racialized landscape and regulatory environment, with important implications for preservation documentation and legal regulations.

From 1870 to 1920, former slaves founded more than 557 “freedom colonies” or freedmen’s towns across the state of Texas.¹ Since then, descendants dispersed to major cities within Texas and the western United States, leaving behind clustered settlements where structures associated with early African American place creation have almost disappeared. Surviving settlements in Newton and Jasper Counties show how descendants have mobilized out of a desire to sustain attachments to place and steward what remains of these communities. These activities reveal a fascinating case of diasporic identity and an in-

novative approach to homestead rehabilitation, decor, and tenancy, which exist at the intersection of intangible and tangible heritage.

These clusters of homesteads are historically significant because they define otherwise illegible settlement patterns of freedom colonies with few extant features in the landscape remaining. This article focuses on homestead preservation in two Newton County settlements, Pleasant Hill and Shankleville (Figures 1 and 2). In Shankleville, descendants have leveraged the social history of their homestead to create a legible community core reminiscent of the original landscape, to

sustain intergenerational attachment to place and local building practices, and to catalyze heritage tourism. In Pleasant Hill, a single woman's homestead decor, tenancy, and building additions reflect a repudiation of common presumptions about rehabilitation and preservation during hurricane recovery.

Each of these cases illuminates a homeplace

aesthetic, a concept devised to capture the meanings, values, and tactics informing descendants' preservation of homesteads as nested anchors of racialized landscapes historically called freedom colonies. The aesthetic reflects how homestead builders and preservationists operate along a spectrum of resistance and compliance. Specifically, descendants' practices are temporally transgressive and privilege their memories of homesteads' protective capacity from the larger "white world."² Understanding the homeplace aesthetic should prompt preservation professionals to support increasing traditional designations for homesteads while foregrounding grassroots preservationists' ontology of place to stimulate reform of current eligibility frameworks. Framing these approaches to vernacular landscape preservation as being informed by a homeplace aesthetic creates discursive possibility (in policy and practice) for more epistemologically inclusive conceptualizations of significance and integrity within the current regulatory scheme.

The term *homeplace aesthetic* explicates the ways homestead preservation, as a lexicon of black freedom, invokes two of cultural theorist bell hooks's concepts: the "homeplace" and "aesthetic inheritance."³ For hooks and other theorists, the homeplace is a vehicle for identity production and for sustaining place attachment, and contains "sites of resistance and liberation" operating "against the outside world" of white surveillance.⁴ Rooted in memories of her family's rural homestead, hooks's notions of homeplaces as spaces that foster black women's renewal, aspiration, cultural continuity, and survival in the face of white surveillance are an aesthetic inheritance that emerged from her recollections of the spiritual and physical interior space (a dedicated room) her grandmother's quilt making took up in their family homestead.⁵ The homeplace aesthetic, evident in the room and in the quilting practice, exists at the intersection of the physical characteristics of the homestead landscape and intangible heritage (memory).

In contrast to hooks's interior orientation, African American studies scholar Earl Lewis's idea of the *homesphere* helps us contextualize the

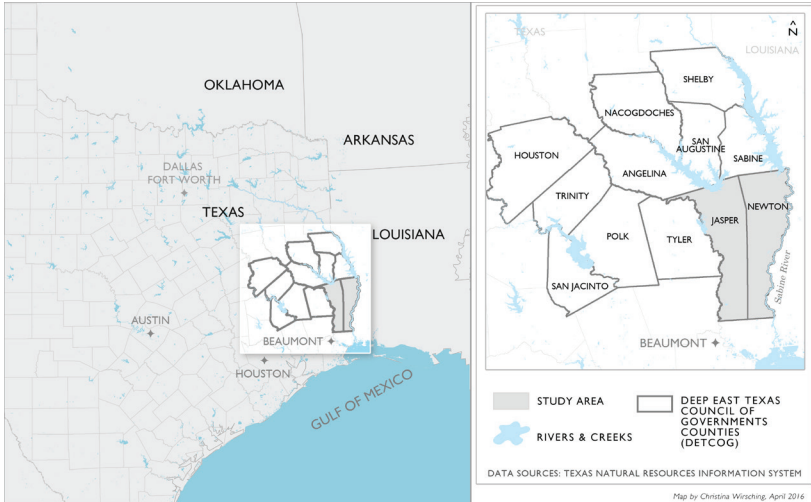


Figure 1. Map of the Deep East Texas Council of Governments region, including Newton County, Texas. Map by Andrea Christina Wirsching, 2016.

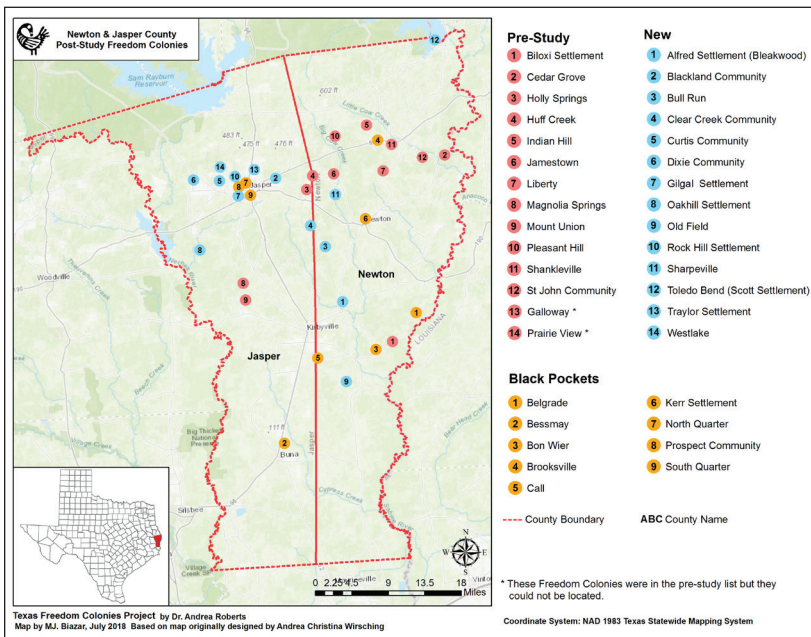


Figure 2. Map of freedom colonies in Newton and Jasper Counties, including Pleasant Hill (10) and Shankleville (11). Map by M. J. (Mohammad Javad) Biazar and Andrea Christina Wirsching, 2018.

physical reach, scale, and situated-ness of the homeplace and freedom colony within the white world. According to Lewis, the homesphere is “a setting where home meant both the household and the community and includes a multilevel environment and set of circulation patterns encompassing the household, the neighborhood, the black community, the city, the state, and so forth.”⁶ Lewis asserts, in the homesphere, that community gains associated with opposition to white power structures (like municipal government) stipulate what constitutes progress.⁷ According to Lewis, the homesphere gained its legitimacy through its engagement—both resistant and assimilationist—with the white world by internally managing cultural expressions, of which building practice is one.⁸

The aesthetics characterizing freedom-colony preservation practice in Shankleville and Pleasant Hill show the ways the homestead can serve as a homeplace, which simultaneously confounds, defies, or capitalizes upon the white worlds they contend with as homespheres. Recently emancipated freedom-colony founders’ homeplaces existed within natural landscapes, and acted as resistant buffer zones against the perpetual surveillance of free African Americans. Conversely, when functioning as homesphere, freedom-colony homestead aesthetics and functionality reflect an adaptive capacity to act as safe spaces from which to interact tactically away from white-dominated institutions and spheres.

The contemporary preservation of the homestead—the nurturing spaces in which agency, the beatification of ancestral artisans, and attachment to place meet—informs the homeplace aesthetic. Recent grassroots efforts to preserve homeplace landscape features through rehabilitation, interior decor, and land retention manifest the spectrum of black identities, freedom-seeking tactics, and cultural expressions, from assimilation to subversion.⁹ Documentation of these variances in blackness in the landscape is essential to capturing relevant yet under-recognized dimensions of significance and integrity. Thus these landscapes offer important lessons for contemporary preservationists.

Resistant, subversive, or assimilationist home-

steads have historical precedent in the pioneering West, the Deep South, urban enclaves, and elite mansions. African Americans’ homesteads, post-emancipation, became freedom-seeking landscapes and at times subverted local conventions and aesthetics. After the Civil War, Southern white landowners endeavored to make the homeplace a space of social indoctrination among Reconstruction-era freedmen. For example, Union general Clinton B. Fisk’s *Plain Counsels for Freedmen* (1866) “set out a behavioral code and architectural program for newly freed African Americans.”¹⁰ Later, black women’s reform movements, Booker T. Washington, and black newspapers evangelized “the iconography of African American domestic architecture,” promoting the idea that “a nice fence about your dwelling, glass in your windows, . . . a little paint, a little whitewash, a few yards of paper, some gravel walks and a few flowers” would garner white acceptance.¹¹

Some African Americans complicated those assimilationist intentions. The first black woman to earn a million dollars as an entrepreneur and owner of beauty schools and salons, Madame C. J. Walker’s furnishings and sense of design promoted her own business goals, allowed her to entertain the black intelligentsia, and signaled that income mobility was possible for black women.¹² Walker developed “a sense of self in the development of her architect-designed homes while imitating the physical properties and cultural values of prominent white American houses.”¹³ Walker told her daughter Leila that her Irvington-on-Hudson mansion’s decor and construction was meant to “convince members [of my] race of the wealth and business possibilities within the race, to point to young Negroes what a lone woman accomplished and to inspire them to do big things.”¹⁴ However, by using “restrained ornamentation of the exterior,” the aspirational interiors of her large upstate New York home, Villa Lewaro, reflected a nonthreatening design that made them appear to be no different from houses owned by whites.¹⁵ She considered her Harlem and upstate New York homes socio-cultural institutions, which built capacity but didn’t disrupt.¹⁶ Similarly, Kingston Wm. Heath

writes of the potential of an African American homestead in Montana to capture “personal freedom, human dignity, familial stability, and financial independence” through its interiors, while remaining tactically inconspicuous.¹⁷ However, unlike freedom colonies, Heath writes about a lone homesteader.

This study also explores the difficulties homeplace preservation faces within the current regulatory context—specifically the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and National Register of Historic Places criteria—which emphasize the significance of architectural features over the social and historical background.¹⁸ Richard Longstreth asserts that their requirements create a false division between architecture and history.¹⁹ For example, current evaluative practices overlook the importance of freedom colonies as exemplary of elements of the homeplace, which is as a landscape of change and Afro-aspirational aesthetics. The standard integrity criteria privilege the primacy of the physical, which is problematic for freedom-colony homesteads.²⁰ Many of these homesteads are often rehabilitated without the benefit of consultation from preservationists who could provide insights on how to maintain the home’s integrity through choice of materials, for example. Further, deferred maintenance, income levels, and title instability often make homestead owners ineligible for government-sponsored repair programs to finance compliance.

Moreover, change has to be considered as less a threat to integrity than as evidence of resilience.²¹ Richard Schein has written that the cultural landscape is “discourse materialized.”²²

The homeplace landscape is a living discourse on black respectability, resistance, subversion, and freedom, which challenges preservationists to contend with multidimensional conceptions of integrity and significance. The reach of preservation agencies intersects with African American intergenerational memory, identity, and wealth, and during the confrontation particular stories of blackness associated with white encounters are legitimized over localized, social constructions of black identity.

The Role of the Homestead in Texas’s Freedom Colonies

Recently freed Texans settled in secluded areas after the Civil War, creating humble homes within communities called freedom colonies. Accumulating land in Texas was no small feat for the formerly enslaved. The Mexican government made eighty acres per person (including slaves) available to new settlers before the Republic of Texas was established in 1836. Since the state’s inception in 1845, property laws privileged the white majority, particularly slaveholders. In 1865 at the end of the Civil War, the Texas Freedmen’s Bureau held no property for redistribution to freedmen.²³ The state’s Black Codes legislation and the 1866 Homestead Act of Texas banned African Americans from accessing the 160 acres in public land available to each white settler.²⁴ When families managed to save enough funds to purchase land, whites would either not sell to them or cancel informal contracts shortly before the final deed transfer. Those that did amass land were financially secure but morally vulnerable, as land accumulation made them targets of white supremacists who felt threatened by black economic advancement. Freedom colonies resulted from clusters of agrarian landowning black families in bottomland seeking security in this climate of racial terror.²⁵ The relationship between land ownership, self-sufficiency, and place-making becomes clear when black farm (and homestead) owners in Texas went from owning 2 percent of all Texas farmland in 1870 to 31 percent by 1910.²⁶

While the Great Migration, political suppression, and economic opportunity in cities meant black rural settlement declined in Texas during the twentieth century, freedom colonies faced additional challenges to their survival related to their legitimacy as real “places.”²⁷ Today, several former freedom colonies are in unincorporated areas, with few built remains to signal their important histories. Coupled with the fact that freedom colonies were typically established in remote areas for defensive purposes, these places are thus mostly invisible to researchers and cultural management professionals. With

few surviving homesteads, intangible aspects of heritage—memories and stories about place names—are all that remains to help observers understand their significance.

Settlement in freedom colonies also dissipated over time due to land loss across generations. Black landowning families who braved county courthouses to record their ownership in the years following Reconstruction made freedom-colony settlement patterns visible. For some of these property owners, land title status, absentee ownership, and white intimidation and trickery precipitated land loss.²⁸ With each new generation, the number of dispersed property heirs increased, hindering estate planning and land retention and making disappearing settlement patterns more likely.²⁹

Those unfamiliar with the history of freedom colonies and their settlement patterns perceive these communities—if they perceive them at all—as wilderness. During interviews, several homestead owners would complain about outsiders hunting on or stealing timber from their land in the middle of the night. The dissipation of recognizable settlement patterns makes preservation of homesteads and the places they help to define a form of resistance to perceived placelessness.³⁰ Making the homesteads and settlement patterns perceptible requires creative, interdisciplinary identification and documentation practices.

Homeplaces are best studied through visual analysis of extant properties, short-term ethnography, archival research, and especially interviews with local residents as well as preservationists.³¹ The regulatory environment, often averse to black subjectivity and fixated on expertise, also became a component of the study context and revealed competing priorities and personal readings of place.³² This is relevant to studying the homeplace, which necessitates nonblacks recognizing subversion and resistance as dimensions of integrity and significance. While the role within the homesphere is visible, the nuanced evidence of historicity and integrity related to agency is more difficult to record. Approaches to understanding the freedom-colony landscape

in this study reflect the author's cognizance of these challenges and include discussions with vernacular architecture scholars and with a preservation architect consulted for this article.³³

Homestead preservation was one of many practices documented among forty-eight recorded interviews with participants in nine different freedom colonies. All participants shared memories, foundational stories, and the names of ancestral and contemporary leaders of placemaking and preservation activities. Part of the preservation process for homesteads and related cultural landscapes is reproducing social memory, which sustains descendants' interest and attachment. Descendants preserving freedom-colony homesteads perceive their homeplaces as sites of memory and everyday lived-in spaces requiring "commemorative vigilance."³⁴ In Shankleville, descendants living in major cities preserve their homestead to create a new community core and to catalyze heritage tourism. In Pleasant Hill, one life-long resident's homestead maintenance, land retention, and interior design define what remains of an almost nonexistent, difficult-to-define settlement. The aesthetic preferences informing both ad hoc and traditional homestead rehabilitation in these freedom colonies reflect this undulating resistance and acceptance of current American preservation standards.

Homestead Preservation in Shankleville and Pleasant Hill

Shankleville and Pleasant Hill both lie along Highway 63, a major thoroughfare stretching between Jasper and Newton Counties. These communities are roughly three hours from Houston and less than fifteen minutes from the Louisiana border. The drive from Houston to Newton County along Highways 59 and 190 runs through what is arguably one of the most distinctly southern areas of Texas. After crossing nineteenth-century truss bridges and slowing down in towns with one traffic light (if any), travelers encounter moss-covered trees framing highways, emerging from human-made reservoirs, and slumping over recreation area signage. The ever-changing terrain begins flat, as drivers

approach freeways hugged on either side by the pines of the Big Thicket forest, the lungs of the southeast.³⁵ People entering Jasper and Newton on Highway 63 are said to be going behind the “Pine Curtain.” Pleasant Hill and Shankleville flank Highway 63.

Shankleville

“Some folks think historic preservation is only for the mansions of famous people, but everyone’s history is worth preserving. Even a modest house and a modest story are worth remembering.”

—Lareatha Clay, Shankleville Historical Society

Located within the town of Burkeville, Shankleville, like many early maroon communities throughout the African diaspora, emerged from the borderlands surrounding plantations.³⁶ Its main thoroughfare is Farm Road 1415, which is lined with nondescript white churches, single-family houses, and mobile homes, with large wooded areas in between properties. Shankleville itself is distinguished by two churches and well-tended cemeteries on either side of the road, and an open expanse in front of a church.

Figure 3. Shankle descendant Harold Odom tending to the spring near the Odom homestead where fugitive slave Jim Shankle is said to have reunited with Winnie Shankle while in bondage. Photograph by Andrea R. Roberts, 2014.



This landscape greeted me on my initial visit to Shankleville during the first annual Purple Hull Pea Festival in June 2014. Festival booths and food vendors scattered across an open field in front of a white church. Cars were parked along the Farm Road and across from one of the cemeteries. There I met Lareatha Clay, who led an abbreviated tour of the community. After showing me the church, she led me to the house anchoring the homestead, and shared Shankleville’s origin story.

According to this story, Jim (b. 1811, Kentucky) and Winnie Shankle (b. 1814, Tennessee) were enslaved together in Mississippi. The owner of Winnie and her three children sold them to his son-in-law in Texas in the mid-1840s. Determined to reunite with his wife and family, Jim embarked on a 400-mile journey to find Winnie. Now a fugitive slave, he swam the Sabine and Mississippi Rivers and asked slaves at east Texas plantations about Winnie’s whereabouts.³⁷ Eventually, Jim found Winnie at a Newton County plantation. Winnie hid him at a spring. However, they were discovered, but she convinced her owner to purchase Jim from his owner in Mississippi. After emancipation, Jim Shankle and his son-in-law Stephen McBride were able to purchase property and made the land available for a town cemetery, school, church, and for resale to recently freed slaves in the area. At this same spring, less than a quarter mile from the Odom homestead, descendants of the Shankles retell their story at biannual family reunions and special events while conducting a libation ritual (Figure 3).

Lareatha calls her grandparents’ Odom homestead in Shankleville her home (Figure 4). She considers preservation of the Odom homestead landscape her life’s mission. Lareatha’s fondest memories are of frequent summer visits there with her late mother, Larutha Odom Clay. For Larutha Clay, born in 1926, the Odom homestead was the homeplace. However, it also had all the markings of a homesphere in which respectability politics informed permissible behavior and aspirations, especially for young girls. Larutha bucked local trends by graduating from Prairie View University instead of marrying im-

mediately after high school. Known for her writing, Larutha leveraged her educational exposure to the broader world to bridge heritage conservation and family tradition. She and her daughter, Lareatha, started a homecoming scholarship competition in 1988 in honor of the founders of Shankleville, which would encourage young people to return each hot Texas summer to the remote settlement (Figure 5). Even as the population declined and the original settlement pattern dissipated, the Odom homestead remains a homesphere for the Shankleville diaspora committed to its preservation (Figure 6).

After formalizing communal ownership of the Odom homestead through a legal trust in 2010, Lareatha successfully listed the A. T. and Addie Odom Homestead on the National



Figure 4. Lareatha Clay, Jim Shankle descendant and grassroots preservationist. Photograph by Andrea R. Roberts, 2014.



Figure 5. Lareatha Clay's mother, Larutha Odom Clay, judging a scholarship competition at the annual Shankleville homecoming, Mount Zion CME Church. Photograph by Andrea R. Roberts, 2014.

Figure 6. Family reunion attendees on front porch, late 1940s. Photograph courtesy Harold Odom.



Register of Historic Places in 2012 (Figure 7). The Odom homestead's listing represented a turning point for the Odom family, as the recognition increased her interaction with public preservation agencies. It placed the property on the radar of statewide and county organizations and made the Odom family eligible for new funding opportunities. By 2014, Lareatha

and the historical society received funding from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to finance a professional rehabilitation report, which assessed actions required to maintain the homestead's integrity.³⁸ Preservation architect Donna Carter performed the assessment.³⁹

Carter describes the Odom homestead as "a designed and built vernacular pedimented bungalow home" with craftsman influences.⁴⁰ The A. T. and Addie Odom Homestead is the only African American historical site in the twelve-county Deep East Texas Council of Governments planning region listed in the National Register, and one of only six listed African American homesteads in the entire country.⁴¹ Built in Shankleville in 1922, the house and outbuildings are considered significant based on their association with persons of importance to African American heritage under Criterion B of the National Register. The main house sits on a 6.76-acre parcel, from a 1949 subdivision of a 42-acre tract, facing County Road 1060. Its contrib-

Figure 7. Addie L. and A. T. Odom House, 2018. Shankleville Burkeville, Newton County, Texas. Photograph by Andrea R. Roberts.



uting buildings are the bungalow, smokehouse, chicken house, and a larger storage building or crib called Noah's Ark.⁴²

With only a sixth grade education, homestead builder Alvoh Troga (A. T.) Odom was an area leader in education, vocational training, and carpentry. He taught his woodworking skills to his sons as well as to boys in the Newton Conservation Corp Camp in the 1930s. He also made coffins, secured grave digging and maintenance tools, and drew cemetery maps. Toward the end of his life, Odom became involved in historic preservation, helping attain a Texas Historical Commission marker for the Shankleville Community in 1973. Well into his eighties, Odom served on the Burkeville school district's Tax Equalization Board, as homecoming secretary, and as a member of the Texas Aging Advisory Council. In these ways, Odom embodied the homesphere.

Odom and his wife also demonstrated leadership aspirations through their homeplace

aesthetic, which set them apart from others in Shankleville (Figure 8). Recalling her childhood, Larutha marveled aloud at how this culture of togetherness thrived in the face of her own relatively privileged upbringing. Larutha explained that her father exerted some agency within the marketplace as a well-paid carpenter and flue flasher. Earning higher wages than his neighbors enabled Odom to earn his family a marker of respectability: "We had electricity, commode in the house. Many never did get that."⁴³

Larutha's mother, Addie, also called Big Momma and the First Lady of Shankleville, was the daughter of the Lewis family, who were area landowners. Addie mentored area women and supervised the Newton County WPA canning plant for "negro women." Notably, she was saluted in her obituary for being a woman who "sat with the ill, dressed the dead, comforted the bereaved, and chastised the pupils on the school bus she drove."⁴⁴ In the landscape, both Addie and A. T. left behind this constant negotiation of



Figure 8. Alvoh Troga (A. T.) Odom and Addie Lewis Odom, 1950s. Photograph courtesy Harold Odom.

assimilation and resistance to the white world's low expectations for rural African Americans. The Odom homestead's role as a homesphere and elements of the homeplace aesthetic have surfaced during the rehabilitation process through an exploration of family stories, structures, interior decor, and photos.

Shankleville Descendants' Memories of Homeplace

Harold Odom, a retired 74-year-old builder, is the leader of the rehabilitation crew. Currently living in the suburbs of Houston, Harold has embraced the role of site supervisor for the Odom homestead project. He recalls how his grandfather, the master carpenter and flue flasher, "built homes and churches all over east Texas." Though A. T. built the home, Harold describes the Odom homestead as "Big Momma's house."⁴⁵

Harold recalls the Odom homestead being the center of community activity in the 1950s and 1960s. While his grandfather worked in carpentry, Harold's grandmother ran a small store on the site of the homestead. He recalls her selling "spices, sugar, things they had to buy that they did not grow. She ran the gardens and the kitchen. She was a major force." Harold also marveled at his grandmother's ability to supply the community with sugar:

My first memory was being there during sugar cane harvest. Big Momma had a mill that would bring in cane. Cane juice would come out, to make syrup. Neighbors would bring cane. There were DAYS of processing cane. I would get a share of the cane. I remember the sights and smells.⁴⁶

His recollections paint a picture of the landscape of the Odom homestead as the robust center of food production and local commerce. However, the National Register application places particular emphasis on the house, describing it as "larger and grander than most contemporary dwellings in the community."⁴⁷ Harold recalls, "When I was a child, all the neighbors had shotgun houses. Every house up there wasn't like Big Momma and Poppa. It was mostly a poverty situation."⁴⁸ Preservationists, meanwhile, understand the

freedom-colony landscape through the prism of the Odom homestead's survival, even though the structure is but one element in a larger economically and socially diverse African American community.

For Harold, "Big Momma's house" was a bountiful place where youth who visited Big Momma, regardless of kinship, could enjoy the bounties of the homestead landscape, where the Odoms grew, harvested, and shared with the less privileged:

We experienced killing hogs, feeding chickens, killing cows, fishing with Big Momma. Sunday school. Taking food to backwoods places where people didn't have. Fellowship of the environment. Big Momma and Big Poppa were pillars of the community. Anchor family. Anchor of the church.

Changes in landscape circulation and movement altered these relationships and sense of place. Though paving the highway made travel safer, the circulation patterns and sense of place the poor road quality afforded Shankleville residents disappeared, Harold recalls:

Houses on the roadside knew what was going on. They were so close-knit. If you saw a car, you knew who it was. We all knew people. Once [county road maintenance] happened, it changed the whole community. Had more workers. People were coming through. Less security.

For Harold, the homestead remains a touchstone enabling him and his progeny to experience the sense of place associated with his youth. Equally significant for Harold is the urgent action required to slow the homestead's deterioration.

The Rehabilitation Process

Yearning for this sense of place and a need to slow the quickening decline of the Odom homestead led Harold to dedicate himself to its rehabilitation. In 2015, Harold built a project team composed of family members, while also receiving ongoing consultation from architect and rehabilitation report author Donna Carter. They devised an approach that addressed the press-

ing need to stabilize deteriorating structures. Lareatha and her brothers have been involved in various projects, including initial electrical rewiring. Architect Donna Carter ensures materials and modifications are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation for Historic Properties.⁴⁹

Harold and Carter devised a work plan while testing and matching building materials. After exposing the walls, they planned to stabilize and prepare the home for an electrical upgrade and convert it to double-wall construction, while still highlighting the original single-wall construction and interior design. At that time, they also located asbestos; this shifted priorities toward remediation. They had to ensure the main house remained habitable and also prevent over-exposure. Simultaneously Harold and Carter attended to water leaks and rot in the outbuildings, including the crib barn, also known as Noah's Ark (Figure 9), which was blown from its foundations by Hurricane Rita in 2005. A. T. Odom built the 19' by 26' rectangular double-gable barn in 1920 as a storage area for peanuts, corn for animals, wagons, and horse plows, and added a roof extension in 1930 (Figure 10).

Though unexpected, the asbestos remediation process also uncovered the Odom's aesthetic inheritance and an innovative approach to compliance with the Secretary of Interior's standards. Once they removed the 1960s-era sheet-rock, Addie Odom's wallpaper, applied directly to the wallboards, was exposed (Figure 11). On the other side of the wall was siding—without insulation. Carter advised Harold to provide a perimeter wall structure and add insulation. Harold and Carter concluded that they could leave at least one interior wall in its original state. They intend to apply matching wallpaper to the newly sheet-rocked double-sided walls. Encased surviving segments of wallpaper from various time periods in glass are displayed throughout the home.

To Harold, the wallpaper is one of many ways that Addie contributed to the home, her husband, and the community: "They were a team." Harold recalled the interiors as spaces in which he observed Big Momma "making things work as a family." In addition to wallpaper, Big Momma



Figure 9. Family rehabilitation of homestead outbuilding, Noah's Ark, 2016. Photograph courtesy Harold Odom.



Figure 10. Family rehabilitation of homestead outbuilding, Noah's Ark, 2016. Photograph courtesy Harold Odom.



Figure 11. Exposed wallpaper inside the Odom homestead, 2016. Photograph courtesy Harold Odom.

painted all the rooms and hung curtains, an extravagance that echoes in Larutha's childhood memories of the home's distinctiveness. Harold tapped into the inherited aesthetic of his grandfather's artisanship and grandmother's enterprising demeanor and dedication to beauty.

In addition to the wallpaper, passing on his grandfather's know-how and stabilizing the porch were highlights of the rehabilitation process (Figure 12). From 2016 to the present, Harold and his grandchildren have been reverse engineering their grandfather's carpentry and sustainable architecture techniques (Figure 13). He remains in awe of his grandfather's ingenuity and the principles of adaptive reuse informing A. T. Odom's construction of the main house:

I look at what he did in 1922, with no electricity. To see the way he created structural integrity. To make it stand until 2017. It is incredible to go up and see the lumber. It is not like he went to Home Depot. It was built out of torn down houses, parts of other houses. He used that lumber to make the house.⁵⁰

The family has also meticulously recorded the home's history through photography. Carter explained, "Big Momma and Big Poppa took pictures that revealed where the bathroom sink was because you can see the sink in the bath-

room, wallpaper patterns, and the calendar on the wall enables you to see the year the photos were taken."⁵¹ The family photos also enabled Carter to set the period of significance at 1945 for rehabilitation.

Carter explains, however, that various aesthetic clues in the family photos she has reviewed indicate change over time throughout the home, which might not formally substantiate integrity but which have value. Among the insights gleaned from the photos were the ever-changing, whimsical examples of beauty: "It does say something that when we go into the 1960s and '70s the wallpaper colors were vibrant pink and green colors. That is a sensibility. We see it in the Caribbean or Africa. The commonality is being part of the African diaspora."⁵²

Freedom-colony homesteads disturb the myth of black impermanence, unintentionality, and homelessness. Carter, herself an African American, has described the affective nature of the homestead, recalling a vague sense of a connection to the homeplace sensibility during her rehabilitation assessment and interactions with the Odoms:

We have a young history which begins sporadically after 1865 in a sense. It is actually extremely important to have some sense of roots of a place to call home, where you are safe. The fact that we don't



Figure 12. Big Momma on back porch, year unknown. Photograph courtesy Harold Odom.



Figure 13. Family rehabilitation of homestead and porch reconstruction, 2016. Photograph courtesy Harold Odom.

have those roots is detrimental to us. Put on top of that society sort of assuming you do not have roots and a fundamental value map. It is important that people think we have a home, and that we know we have a home as African Americans.⁵³

Carter argues that the “family’s story as a whole is in a sense embedded in those buildings.” More specifically, the stories tell us about taskscapes, which explain the homestead landscape’s functions and use over time.⁵⁴ “You had a chicken coop, hunting, preserves, smokehouse. The fact that the coop moved because you were rotating a crop.” Carter determines that the building aesthetics reflect a balance between aspiration and pragmatism.

I saw people making do. The framing is not conventional. Things happened as they were needed. There was an apparent order, rationale in their vernacular building processes and materials choices, and an aesthetic, even though these choices never clearly coalesced around a single architectural style.⁵⁵

Some of the Odom descendants’ fondest memories as children were set on the back porch, making that an important aspect of the rehabilitation project for them, and they prioritized restoring the porch in addition to stabilizing the home and outbuildings. In this way descendants can somewhat control the rehabilitation process despite a restrictive regulatory context that does not prioritize their memories. Carter argues that determining integrity requires a grasp of regulations, as well as centering the inhabitant’s social construction of authenticity in the structure and decor as well as features of the landscape: “As a preservation architect, you have to be open to looking at preservation as somehow a living, an organic process. Start asking some questions. What for you about this place says integrity? Integrity comes back as stories, it comes out as anecdotes, and if you are lucky they have photos, or it spurs people to look for those photos.”⁵⁶ Carter says she focused attention on what descendants most wanted to see returned to the conditions they recalled as children. Additional goals included lifting the crib wall back onto its

foundation and restoring the smokehouse, and completing repairs to the house.

With the Shankleville mother church to its left, the spring down a path to its right, and the Jim Shankle Cemetery directly across from both, the Odom homestead continues to be an anchor. The homeplace nurtured, acculturated, and empowered African Americans as a homesphere in a racialized landscape. However, without a well-maintained archive, memories, and descendants well versed in preservationist regulatory frameworks, the Odom homestead may never have been listed on the National Register. Stories are essential to making that value visible. Carter maintains that “establishing integrity requires story and various aspects of continuity not easily communicated through style. Persistence and tenure within a disappearing settlement pattern also provide context and validation of the homestead. The fact of its survival is a style.”⁵⁷

Pleasant Hill

In contrast to Shankleville, some freedom colonies have few remaining homesteads and settlement patterns are no longer discernible. Pleasant Hill, for example, consists today only of a church and small cluster of houses in a secluded area in Farrsville, Texas. Once home to the Farr Plantation, just a handful of the community’s post-emancipation homesteads remain.

Pleasant Hill came to my attention from a cursory glance at a 1989 state transportation map and subsequent interactions with descendants. Sheron Bruno, a descendant of settlement founders, recounted Pleasant Hill’s foundational story, which echoed that of nearby Shankleville.⁵⁸ Bruno’s great-great-grandparents were Lewis Hines and Julia (Farr), who were initially enslaved in Mississippi. The Farris of Texas, who founded the Farrisville community and its mill in 1833, purchased Julia. After Lewis escaped Mississippi, the Hines, who lived near the Farris, took him when his family came to Texas. He remained near the Hines and Farris, homesteading 160 acres near Big Cow Creek, which he registered with the county in 1870. Most families in the Lewis Hines survey would later move closer to Shankleville.⁵⁹ The family

alleged that someone stole the land from Julia after Lewis passed away.

"Where I Grew Up and Where I Will Stay"

Black land dispossession, a normative characteristic of racialized landscapes in Texas, shaped Irene Palmer's approach to rehabilitation and preservation of her homestead. One of the few remaining residents of Pleasant Hill, Irene Clack Palmer was born in 1944 in Newton County to Jesse and Lela Clack. She describes herself as a descendant of the Powell and King families, who were once enslaved on the Farr Plantation, and as having black and Native American ancestry.⁶⁰ Palmer lives on her homestead in a house her father built in 1930.⁶¹ The home is where she nurtured her family while resisting the culture of land dispossession in a homesphere altered multiple times since it was first built (Figures 14 and 15).

During the summer of 2015, I stayed overnight with Palmer and interviewed her in her home, where she recalled how the sale of land led to the dissipation of her freedom colony, ex-

plaining that many relatives and church members "sold out their parts, their sixteen acres." Pleasant Hill residents recall a vibrant tight-knit community, but it is not a geographic space as we traditionally understand it. You will not find it on a current map. When defining the settlement, Palmer waved her arms to indicate the spatial and kinship relationships that once covered the landscape surrounding her home. "Cross the creek was cousins, kinfolks there together. We raised and farmed on the land. Grandparents on daddy side were there. The Kings lived up there near the Church."⁶²

Palmer described experiencing peace and empowerment at her homestead: "It is where I grew up at, and that is where I will stay. It is peaceful. I visited different cities. Like Dorothy said, 'There's no place like home.'" Even as most of her neighbors have left and other heirs abandoned their property, Palmer remains at her family homestead at the end of a wooded, sunlit county road, two miles off Highway 63.

The land Palmer lives on has been in her fam-

Figure 14. Mrs. Palmer's house, Pleasant Hill. Photograph by Andrea R. Roberts, 2015.



ily for generations, and her grandfather was one of the earliest landowners in Pleasant Hill. The independence of the residents enabled area families to negotiate the white world less often than those who lived in town. They retained some of the same foodways that they had before emancipation. She recalled the hard work, autonomy, and self-sufficient agrarian lifestyle of her childhood in a bountiful freedom colony:

My grandpa was a landowner. We were in the field. I come up in the field with corn, peas, watermelon, goats, cows, hogs, all that. That is what we were raised on. We did not go to town as people go to town now. We went to town Saturday to buy salt, meal, things like that. 'Cause we raised all our meals, raised veal, corn, peas. Raised chicken. We did not go to town to buy things as they do now. Raised all that.

Palmer's home was also a shelter, providing a place to recover after the many traumas she experienced. In 1989, her husband died in a car accident on his way to work, forcing her to take on multiple low-wage jobs at area hospitals. No-



Figure 15. Palmer house front porch. The Palmer (Clack) homestead is located on County Road 1066, Pleasant Hill. Photograph by Andrea R. Roberts, 2015.

tably, she retained ownership of her homeplace, keeping taxes current and putting her children through college.

The church is one of the last recognizable anchors of the landscape—and Palmer has been Pleasant Hill CME Church's secretary since she was eighteen, maintaining the institution's history (Figure 16). I met Palmer at the church's annual homecoming in 2015, when it celebrated its eighty-fifth anniversary (Figure 17). At Pleasant Hill's Saturday night homecoming service, Palmer read a history of the annual gathering that sounded more like a history of all the settlements in the county (Figure 18). Her recitation of church history captured the interdependence



Figure 16. Pleasant Hill CME Church sign facing Highway 63. Photograph by Andrea R. Roberts, 2015.



Figure 17. Pleasant Hill CME Church entrance. Photograph by Andrea R. Roberts, 2015.



Figure 18. Mrs. Irene Palmer (on the right) at Pleasant Hill Homecoming's Saturday night music program. Photograph by Andrea R. Roberts, 2015.

that sustained the homesphere of the county's network of freedom colonies. She recalls a formerly united community with families divided only by fence lines and united in their reliance on one another and area timber concerns:

At one time, it was a big community. All they did was farm and take care of children. If one had, all had. Everybody was on the same level. All they had back in the day was logging, and [they would] load "pluck wood" on hands and shoulder. They supported their families that way.

Preserving the Homeplace

Palmer attributed the dissipation of the settlement to descendants moving away to find work.

Working in cities altered peoples' income levels and class status, creating a stark contrast between those that remained and those that "started leaving out. Most went to California and Houston, Dallas." Palmer and her sisters were determined not to sell and even when all the other relatives sold their homesteads, they kept the property taxes current. She explained the vulnerabilities created by the county tax-assessment system. According to Palmer, absentee, poor and working class, and elderly landowners in Pleasant Hill often had unclear titles, leaving them susceptible to working with deceptive area land brokers. She explained that land had "been going from hand to hand. One hundred-plus acres. They sold out."

Palmer shared the story of her former neighbor, Mattie "Mamee" Booker, the oldest remaining resident in the settlement, to explain the ways white ownership claims supersede those of African Americans:

Plenty land was owned by J. L. Lanier. There was white-owned land nearby my cousin, O'Neal Booker. His wife is old, Mamee Booker. As soon as he died, white folks say O'Neal never owned that land. A lawyer was working on it. Booker had fenced it and farmed it. Younger white folks have tried to take it from him.⁶³

So how does this taking occur? Palmer explained that "in Newton County, sometimes they take tax from two different folks for the same land. Get money from whoever bring it in there." Many area residents attribute these mix-ups and multiple homesteading claims to original Mexican impresarios and even black elites who, on behalf of whites, sold land to other blacks with unclear titles. In other instances, if female residents were living in the home but not on the title, they became easy targets should taxes increase during periodic land censuses. Palmer sometimes cut her timber to cover the rising tax bill. She also admonished her children to pay taxes and keep records of payment:

I tell them all the time. Lots of land around here, people died, and young people got put off because

they did not pay the taxes. Keep up with receipts. That is the way they do the poor Black folks, and then say they didn't pay their taxes.

Some remaining property owners, Palmer said, leased their land to hunters, which further disrupted the sense of place associated with the safe, insular freedom-colony landscape. Palmer negotiated a racialized landscape in which African American land dispossession was the norm (Figure 19).

The homeplace enabled her to experience freedom through her wall decor choices and room additions. The wall decor is a mixture of items like those Zora Neale Hurston describes in her 1934 essay “Characteristics of Negro Expression”: commercial calendars, posters, cut-outs of Michelle and Barack Obama, and many photos of children and grandchildren, so many that they covered nearly all of the wood paneling (Figure 20). Palmer added rooms to the original house over time to accommodate her growing family, which was perceptible while walking on slightly indented flooring at each door threshold.

Offered a new home after hurricanes Rita and Ike, Palmer instead retained her homestead: “They came around, wanted to give me a house. Two bedrooms, but one bath. I said no. I will be in this house until the Lord come get me, or it burn down, or the next storm blow it away.” She explained that while some of her neighbors built new homes, she repaired hers. I asked Palmer why she did not accept the disaster-recovery-funded homes. While smiling broadly, Palmer explained that she “always wanted a big house. I like it.” She preferred her current home and the freedom to expand as she deemed necessary. Palmer was supposed to want a “new” home, yet she negotiated the intersecting discourses in the landscape—property rights, government finance (taxes), and place identity—by centering her aesthetics and sense of autonomy.

Palmer’s homeplace aesthetic is not one of restoration to a point of time in the past. Instead, her aesthetic prioritizes an internally developed sense of beauty, autonomy, and legal continuity. Her work in the homesphere—Palmer’s church denomination district and home congregation—

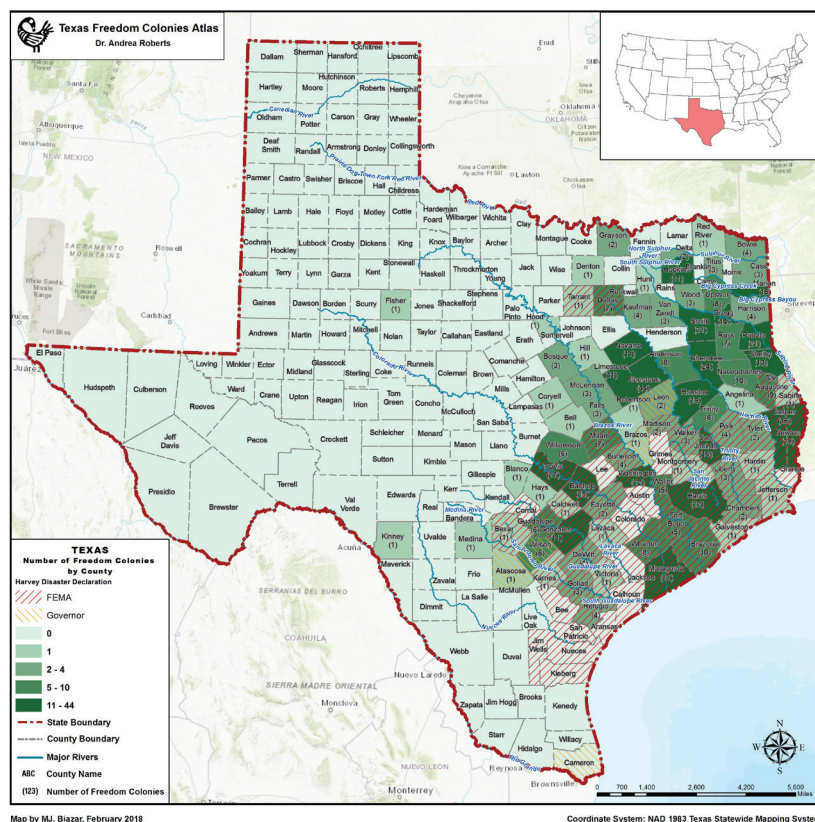


Figure 19. Concentrations of freedom colonies by county, and Hurricane Harvey Disaster Declaration Areas reflecting the vulnerabilities of freedom colonies like those in Newton County, Texas. Map by M. J. (Mohammad Javad) Biazar, 2018.



Figure 20. Palmer house interior: family photos. Photograph by Andrea R. Roberts, 2015.

created a built-in system for attracting the dispersed descendants of Pleasant Hill founders back to the homesphere, an annual homecoming where she shares land retention strategies. One of her sons has used his proximity to lawyers to draw up legal documents attesting to her ownership and an estate plan. Such estate planning is essential, as area timberland has become increasingly attractive to Hancock Timber Resource Group, an investment arm of John Hancock Life Insurance. While these companies share some interest in land conservation, they are less likely to engage in conservation of settlement patterns unknown to most appraisal districts and dropped from orientation maps decades ago.

Significance and integrity for Palmer did not lie in a formal rehabilitation process seeking compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act. Instead, her model of homestead preservation and her core story of perseverance and adaptive capacity to recover were enmeshed. Room additions to the home and family photos marked periodization, reflected her ability to retain her aesthetic inheritance, and to realize her ideal space.

The Homeplace Aesthetic: Freedom-Seeking in African American Landscapes

Observation of homestead preservation approaches in Shankleville and Pleasant Hill reveals descendants' uneasy negotiations between assimilationist and subversive approaches to seeking freedom and agency. Three categories of negotiation define the homeplace aesthetic: contesting preservation standards, substantiating integrity with intangible versus tangible heritage, and contending with the white gaze embedded in historic preservation and state property regimes.

Contesting Preservation Standards

Shankleville ancestors and descendants have a heritage of straddling black-and-white worlds. In the past, the Odom homestead was a clear homesphere, which provided education, training, a model of class mobility, and even food to the surrounding community. A. T. and Addie Odom left their descendants equipped to access main-

stream preservation organizations and technical support. Larutha and Lareatha were aware of the Odoms' privileged status and their parents' civic leadership, which qualified the property for listing under Criterion B.

Today, the Odoms engage in tactical compliance with formal preservation to attain funding, using the homeplace to engage whiteness on their terms. Carter explains what shapes compliance versus resistance to preservation regulations:

Most families don't have people who can wield hammers and pay for everything. . . . In order to do this we have to look like we know what we are doing to ask for funding from those who are used to conventional preservation. Now we have to be conversant. Lareatha is a resource for that. She explains. She asked me, what do I need to explain to my family? Give me the words to explain why we have to do it this way; she realized she was making that translation. It comes down to pocketbook.⁶⁴

The Odoms exemplified the vacillation between assimilation and resistance. They challenged the aesthetics and definition of significance by determining that their vernacular homestead's architectural and social life had equal historical value, pursuing its placement on the National Register, and practicing cultural traditions rooted in their foundational story to sustain attachment and intergenerational involvement in Shankleville's preservation.

Memory and Intangible Heritage Defines Integrity
Essential to the successful determination of integrity and a corresponding period of significance are archival materials like photos. Harold Odom's conservation of family photos enabled Carter's rehabilitation report to pinpoint a period of significance. Carter has stressed the value of "historic photos and documentation, oral histories, and other information readily available from these sources."⁶⁵ Stories and memories of Big Momma have also sustained Harold Odom's attachment to the house in Shankleville. Addie informs the rehabilitation project, as Harold and others have elected to leave evidence of her imprint—wallpaper and the porch—on the

structure as an expression of her impression on their lives.

Palmer and her approach to space and place conservation while living in working-class rural conditions has much to tell us about local social constructions of integrity. For example, Palmer's original house, before her additions, might be of interest to historic preservationists. Equally significant, however, are the cultural practices and the life experiences that informed her decisions to reinvest in her space even when offered a new home. Her practice of "adding on" is another freedom-seeking process. Though the additions may have destroyed architectural integrity, the home still reminded her of a sense of peace indigenous to freedom-colony landscapes. Homeplace as biographical space allowed to change over time is reflected in Palmer's decision to add on to her house and in the layers of wallpaper in the Odom homestead. The homeplace aesthetic communicates time as "an ongoing process of interaction between people and their surroundings—an integration of time, space, and experience."⁶⁶ The continuity explicated through the homeplace aesthetic is a form of integrity. When interpreted as "taskscape," spaces that explain a landscape's functions and uses over time, the homeplace landscape shows us variations on themes or functions "continually in a process, always under construction," and "an assemblage of 'making' within the multi-temporal nature of time (synchronized with the biographies of builders/users)."⁶⁷ Like hooks's quilting grandmother, adding on to a space reflected not corruption but an affirmation of cultural continuity in the home.

Negotiating Historic Preservation's White Gaze

bell hooks maintained that homeplace has continuously been a refuge from white supremacy, which allowed for strategizing as well as, in hooks's case, envisioning a life of the mind. Similarly, the freedom-colony diaspora's homestead preservation reproduces the tangible and intangible features of free, black sovereign spaces and landscapes. Freedom-colony descendants explaining their continued attachment and dedication to their homesteads describe them

as spaces in which they feel fully human, safe, self-determining, and part of a culture rooted in not just black life generally, but freedom colonies specifically.

In "Black Vernacular: Architecture as Cultural Practice," hooks spoke to the lack of legitimacy afforded Palmer and other poor and working-class blacks' ability to dream of and build the ideal space. In imagining her ideal space, hooks writes, "On paper, in structure and design the house I imagined was a place for the fulfillment of desire, a place with no sense of necessity."⁶⁸ Like hooks, Palmer envisioned and realized her home's size, shape, circulation patterns, and placement of its contents in formations responsive to her needs. Similarly, hooks grew up seeing "freedom as always and intimately linked to the issue of transforming space."⁶⁹ Pointing to the legacy of enslavement, she characterized spatial agency as contributing to African Americans' under-recorded "cultural genealogy of resistance." Thus, Palmer's approach to homestead preservation is a freedom-seeking process animated by the desire to maintain self-sufficient space and cultural continuity against outside regulations that undermined her agency as a taxpayer.⁷⁰

Informed by the homeplace aesthetic, vernacular landscape preservation in freedom colonies reveals inextricable links between blackness and the low esteem afforded pre-integration spaces. Many of these segregation-era landscapes are in rapidly deteriorating communities with built environments that challenge the National Park Service's definition of integrity, which idealizes buildings frozen at a single point in time.⁷¹ However, freedom colonies are cultural landscapes situated not only in a place or time but also within the memories of descendants. In "The Path to Big Mama's House," the late Clement Price invokes, autobiographically, the *affective* power of homesteads to define black communities and home away from the white gaze: "Places and spaces, like Big Mama's house, their humbleness notwithstanding, now loom large in what matters in the way historians are deciphering what blacks did as free people."⁷²

Price did not recognize the value of his Big

Mama's house immediately, but rather conjured it through recollection. His undervaluing of these spaces came from what he describes as "the constant comparisons that black Americans make between majority privilege and minority disadvantage," which, he asserts, "took its toll on the power of place." This undervaluing is also rooted in Progressive Era indoctrination, which urged African Americans to build a "comfortable, tasty, framed cottage" to replace the "one-room log hovel that had been their abode for a quarter of a century."⁷³ Freedom-colony vernacular homesteads resist a singular style or model. Palmer, for example, preserved some semblance of the freedom-colony culture of independence and separation from whites and their standards.

However, Big Mama's house was a constant incubator of security and black esteem during the 1960s, a period of upheaval. The power of homeplace, Big Mamas house, embodied the interior life Price's grandmother created. These components, intangible and tangible, acted together to help him find home and "come to grips with the paradox of being an American outsider and an American seeking to become a part of the mainstream of contributing citizens." Price not only found comfort here but came to appreciate his grandmother's "southern born savvy and navigational instincts in the face of the larger society's barriers."⁷⁴ For Price and Harold Odom, these homeplaces were not recalled solely for their integrity. Freedom from white surveillance felt in the kitchen or on a freedom-colony porch sustained the attachment.

Conclusion: The Homeplace Aesthetic and Historic Preservation

The homeplace aesthetic is in part a provocation that asks readers to contemplate which principles should inform an equitable approach to landscape preservation practice and policy. Preservation and cultural resource management must move beyond landscape as a fetish.⁷⁵ First, practitioners' focus must shift away from "the material elements and visual character of landscapes and toward a greater emphasis on the multiple dimensions of *agency* in landscapes."⁷⁶ By doing so, there is real potential to bridge landscape the-

ory with challenges facing preservation policy and issues. Engaging the homestead through the lens of the homeplace aesthetic asks us to envision landscape as a medium to recognize, process, or create justice, not just to screen the landscape unquestioningly through the lens of federal compliance regulations.

Drawing attention to these homesteads (and by extension, the freedom colonies of which they are part) reveals fresh opportunities for landscape preservation practice, pedagogy, and policy reforms. Practitioners may employ a wider variety of social science, legal, and humanities perspectives and methodologies to enable identification of the homeplace aesthetic.⁷⁷ As a result, the overlooked interior work of community building and freedom-seeking in homesteads may substantiate previously unrecognized arguments for historical significance, protection, and listing. Moreover, National Register and local historic district applications might allow for increased detail or alternative measures of assigning integrity and significance so as to encompass nuanced conceptualizations of homespheres and homeplaces. Working in collaboration with local archivists and historical commissions, public agencies can encourage homestead owners to conserve photos and other records, which could later enable owners to substantiate integrity and significance. This proactive measure can raise awareness of the benefits of listing and increase technical assistance and outreach to settlements.

Grassroots preservationist support and advocacy also present an opportunity for landscape preservationists' work to gain relevance.⁷⁸ To be relevant to African American homestead owners, preservationists and those conversant in landscape theory or history must be prepared to frame conversations with descendants within their current concerns about land access, control, and ecosystem health.⁷⁹ In addition, state agencies might fund and train preservationists to test approaches that capture the relationships between the historical, affective, and interior lives of homestead landscapes while also collaborating with planners to assess challenges to land retention and the sustainable use of natural resources.⁸⁰

To preserve homeplace integrity, preservation-

ists can document the interior and exterior dimensions of freedom-seeking among its founders and descendants, made apparent through memories. Further, assessments and surveys should give equal attention to the homesphere and the homeplace. Making criteria and practice inclusive of these constructions of significance requires explaining the interior lives of African Americans, especially spaces envisioned or designed by women.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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NOTES

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1. Thad Sitton and James H. Conrad, *Freedom Colonies: Independent Black Texans in the Time of Jim Crow* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 191–98. Like Sitton's and Conrad's list of settlements, my database is continually updated and reviewed in partnership with settlement descendants, public archives, and my student research team. Andrea R. Roberts, Texas Freedom Colonies Project Atlas (2.0), <http://bit.ly/txfcpatlastwo>.

2. La Marr Jurelle Bruce, "Interludes in Madtime: Black Music, Madness, and Metaphysical Syncopation," *Social Text* 35, no. 4 (2017): 6.

3. bell hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New Press, 1995). hooks cites architectural theorist

La Verne Wells-Bowie, who argues that for African Americans, "vernacular architecture is a language of cultural expression" that "exemplifies how the physical environment reflects the uniqueness of a culture." See also bell hooks, "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance," in *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990); bell hooks, "Aesthetic Inheritances: History Worked by Hand," in *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 153–61.

4. James S. Duncan and David Lambert, "Landscapes of Home," in *A Companion to Cultural Geography*, ed. James S. Duncan, Nuala C. Johnson, and Richard H. Schein (London: Blackwell, 2004), 388. Several theorists describe the activities occurring in the homeplace. Duncan and Lambert describe the manner in which "people produce their identities in and through places, especially homeplaces." See also hooks, "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance"; and Annelise Morris, "Materialities of Homeplace," *Historical Archaeology* 51, no. 1 (2017): 28–42. hooks's notion of the homeplace also emphasizes the paradox of resistance coming from within unassuming places "(the slave hut, the wooden shack)." Similarly, Harlem Renaissance writer Zora Neale Hurston validated the search for beauty among humble homeplaces. See Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression" (1934), in *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin'and Slam Dunking: A Reader in African American Expressive Culture*, ed. Gena Dagel Caponi (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 25, 293–309.

5. bell hooks, "Aesthetic Inheritances, History Worked by Hand," 115–22. hooks describes the aesthetic informing her grandmother's intentional, careful selection of cloth and designs. She recalls that even though she didn't read or write, worked with her hands, and never considered herself an artist, her grandmother confidently remarked, "I know beauty when I see it," 116.

6. Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth-Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 5.

7. Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*.

8. Todd M. Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs: Black Upward Mobility and Neighborhood Change in Cleveland, 1900–1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 15. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Meta-language of Race," *Signs* 17, no. 2 (1992): 251–74. While

still resistant to white oppression, the homesphere is a space in which both community capacity building and internal policing of behavior (demarcating the poor from the working class and the working class from the middle class) takes place. Higginbotham calls this gendered policing the “politics of respectability,” a concept which explains African Americans’ repression of certain aspects of expressive culture, including “sexual behavior, dress style, leisure activity, music, speech patterns, and religious worship patterns.”

9. Katharine N. Rankin, “Critical Development Studies and the Praxis of Planning,” *City* 13, no. 2–3 (2009): 189. Subversion, a slightly nuanced form of resistance, is not always intentional and is part of “individual, covert instances of nonconformity” making the most of oppressive circumstances.

10. Barbara Burlison Mooney, “The Comfortable Tasty Framed Cottage: An African American Architectural Iconography,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 61, no. 1 (March 2002): 53.

11. Mooney, “The Comfortable Tasty Framed Cottage,” 52.

12. Tara Dudley, “Seeking the Ideal African-American Interior: The Walker Residences and Salon in New York,” *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 14, no. 1 (2006): 82–83.

13. Dudley, “Seeking the Ideal African-American Interior,” 103.

14. Dudley, 100.

15. Dudley, 104.

16. Dudley, 109.

17. Kingston Wm. Heath, “Buildings as Cultural Narratives: Interpreting African American Lifeways in a Montana Gold Mining Camp,” *Buildings & Landscapes* 21, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 1, 11–12. Heath writes about Minerva Coggsell, a black woman he argues demonstrated her sensibilities through wallpaper, which represented dignity and permanence. Her interior choices, “tables and chairs, a set of china dishes, a cupboard, a clock, a birdcage, new wallpaper, and one or more of her lamps” exemplify her aspirations for normal domestic life in the mining camp.

18. Richard W. Longstreth, ed., *Cultural Landscapes: Balancing Nature and Heritage in Preservation Practice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 2.

19. Longstreth, *Cultural Landscapes*, 12.

20. Charles A. Birnbaum, “Protecting Cultural

Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes,” Preservation Brief 36, Technical Preservation Services, National Park Service, January 12, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/36-cultural-landscapes.htm>. See also Jeff Joeckel, “Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties, National Register of Historic Places Bulletin, No. 38,” November 28, 2001, <https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb38/>. Integrity criteria refers to dimensions or aspects of integrity. There are seven aspects: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Integrity also supports the statement of significance.

21. Heath, “Buildings as Cultural Narratives,” 12.

22. Richard H. Schein, “The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87, no. 4 (1997): 663. Also see Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan, *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (London: Routledge, 2013); James Duncan and Nancy Duncan, “Aesthetics, Abjection, and White Privilege in Suburban New York,” in *Landscape and Race in the United States*, ed. Richard H. Schein (London: Routledge, 2006), 157–76; Don Mitchell, “Metaphors to Live By: Landscapes as Systems of Social Reproduction,” *Cultural Studies: An Anthology*, ed. Michael Ryan (London: Blackwell, 2000), 101–23; Richard H. Schein, “Representing Urban America: 19th-Century Views of Landscape, Space, and Power,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 11, no. 1 (1993): 7–21; Denis Cosgrove, “Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 10 (1985): 45–62.

23. “From Texas; Important Orders by General Granger. Surrender of Senator Johnson of Arkansas. A Scattering of Rebel Officials,” *New York Times*, July 7, 1865.

24. Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas, 1528–1995* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 54.

25. Kenneth L. Brown et al., “African American Archaeology in Texas: A Planning Document,” June 1, 2013, 46, Staff Files, Texas Historical Commission, Austin; see also Sitton and Conrad, *Freedom Colonies*, 11. Sitton and Conrad describe freedom colonies as “dis-

persed communities—settlements, in unplatted areas individually unified only by a church and school and residents' collective belief that a community existed."

26. Brown et al., "African American Archaeology in Texas," 57. Historical archaeologists contend that homesteads were arguably as constitutive of freedom colonies as churches or schools, explaining that "collectively, rural black homesteads comprise about half of all recorded African American-related sites in Texas." See also Loren Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790–1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 164.

27. Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010); Bernadette Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration: The Movement of Rural African Americans to Houston, 1900–1941* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013).

28. Sitton and Conrad, *Freedom Colonies*, 4.

29. Thomas W. Mitchell, "From Reconstruction to Deconstruction: Undermining Black Landownership, Political Independence, and Community through Partition Sales of Tenancies in Common," *Northwestern University Law Review* 95 (2000): 2. Mitchell writes, "The trajectory of ownership and dispossession has its origins in the 1865 Freedmen's Bureau sale of land owned by ex-confederates to freed slaves. Uniquely, Texas was omitted from this opportunity due to late word of Emancipation."

30. E. C. Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976); Andrea R. Roberts, "Performance as Place Preservation: The Role of Storytelling in the Formation of Shankleville Community's Black Counterpublics," *Journal of Community Archaeology & Heritage* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/20518196.2018.1480002>.

31. Sarah Pink and Jennie Morgan, "Short-Term Ethnography: Intense Routes to Knowing," *Symbolic Interaction* 36, no. 3 (2013): 351–61.

32. Longstreth, *Cultural Landscapes*, 1.

33. Donna D. Carter, FAIA, phone interview with the author, August 3, 2018. Several vernacular architecture theorists echo Carter's position on interdisciplinary approaches to assessment and rehabilitation. Vellinga and Asquith argue for interdisciplinary research, which takes into account "the mutually constitutive relationship between people and things/material culture in the direction of ar-

chitectural anthropology." Ara and Rashid support "cross-disciplinary" approaches to detect "holistic ethnographic knowledge about the building process." Notably, the planning study from which the article originates focused on ephemeral dimensions of significance, contradicting the bias toward the most durable aspects of real property in National Register of Historic Places regulations, which Herman argues is "associated historically with the agency of white men of means." See Lindsay Asquith and Marcel Vellinga, *Vernacular Architecture in the 21st Century: Theory, Education and Practice* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2006); Dilshad Ara and Mamun Rashid, "Imaging Vernacular Architecture: A Dialogue with Anthropology on Building Process," *Architectural Theory Review* 21, no. 2 (2016): 173; Bernard L. Herman, "Fleeting Landscapes and the Challenge for Historic Preservation," *Historic Preservation Forum* 8, no. 2 (1994): 8.

34. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (April 1, 1989): 12.

35. James Cozine, *Saving the Big Thicket from Exploration to Preservation, 1685–2003* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2004), 86.

36. Sylviane A. Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* (New York: NYU Press, 2014).

37. Odom Family Trust, "Shankleville, Odom House SBR National Register of Historic Places Registration Application," Texas Historical Commission National Register Program, January 2012, 16. Diane E. Williams, *Addie L. and A. T. Odom House* (U.S. National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 2011). Population data corroborated in part by census records.

38. Rehabilitation is consistent with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Historic Projects (CFR Title 36) Chapter I, Part 68.

39. Carter Design Associates, "Addie and A. T. Odom Homestead Rehabilitation Report," Study-Evaluation (Burkeville, Texas, vicinity, Newton County, Texas, November 2014).

40. Carter Design Associates, "Odom Homestead Rehabilitation Report," 9.

41. Carter Design Associates, "Odom Homestead Rehabilitation Report." A search of African American Homestead listings on the National Register of Historic Places on July 12, 2019 returned the following

six sites: Mather Homestead; MacFarlane Homestead Historic District; Owen Lovejoy Homestead; George Washington Carver Homestead Site; Addie L. and A. T. Odom Homestead; and the McKinney Homestead. See Digital Archive on NPGallery website, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/SearchResults/AfricanAmerican>.

42. Odom Family Trust, "Shankleville," 2.
43. Larutha Odom Clay interview with Sherri Sheu, Shankleville, February 2, 2014, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, http://av.cah.utexas.edu/index.php?title=Foodways:Shankleville_larutha_odum_clay&gsearch=shankleville
44. "Obituary, Mother Addie Jane Odom," Mount Hope Baptist Church, June 19, 1987, Clay Papers, Larutha M. Odom, Beaumont, TX.
45. Harold Odom (descendant of Jim and Winnie Shankle), interview by author, March 5, 2015.
46. Odom interview.
47. Williams, *Addie L. and A. T. Odom House*.
48. Odom interview.
49. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*, revised by Anne E. Grimmer (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service Technical Preservation Services, 2017), 75, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf>.
50. Odum interview.
51. Carter interview.
52. Carter interview.
53. Carter interview.
54. Asquith and Vellinga, *Vernacular Architecture in the 21st Century*, 187.
55. Carter interview.
56. Carter interview.
57. Carter interview.
58. Sheron Bruno, email message to author, March 16, 2015.
59. Lewis Hines, "Lewis Hines Land Survey," October 8, 1880, Texas Land Grant Office, Land Grant Search, <http://www.glo.texas.gov/history/archives/land-grants/landgrants.cfm?intID=33982>. Surveys contain various land subdivisions. The land survey name is that of the person or concern bearing the land certificate at the time the survey was filed.

60. "Farrsville History-Newton County Texas," <http://www.toledo-bend.com/newton/history/index.asp?request=farrsville>. Adjacent to the Farrs plantation was a Native American settlement where another freedom colony arose called Indian Hill because local folklore says the settlement is the place where county residents saw the last Indian. The area has been documented as a settlement of the Atakapa tribe. Also see Thomas A. Wilson and Madeleine Martin, *Some Early Southeast Texas Families* (Austin: Nortex Press, 1986).

61. "Newton CAD-Property Details," accessed May 26, 2017, https://propaccess.trueautomation.com/clientdb/Property.aspx?prop_id=20583

62. All of the following quotes are from the author's interview with Irene Palmer, July 11, 2015.

63. J. L. Lanier, was a white landowner in the region, Jasper City council member, and local merchant. His store, built in 1912, is a local landmark on the Jasper County courthouse square.

64. Carter interview.

65. Carter Design Associates, "Odom Homestead Rehabilitation Report," 37.

66. Ara and Rashid, "Imaging Vernacular Architecture," 187.

67. Asquith and Vellinga, *Vernacular Architecture in the 21st Century*, 187.

68. hooks, *Art on My Mind*, 145.

69. hooks, *Art on My Mind*, 147.

70. Neil Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Neil Roberts, "Fanon's Rebel Fifty Years Later," *Karib* 2 (2015): 65. Political philosopher Neil Roberts characterizes marronage, the act of escaping enslavement, as lines of flight (Deleuze). He calls marronage "a process of becoming free." This article frames freedom-colony descendants' planning practices as constitutive of the ongoing process of becoming free.

71. National Park Service, "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, National Register of Historic Places Bulletin (NRB 15)," accessed August 27, 2014, http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_2.htm. Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a period. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character.

72. Clement Alexander Price, "The Path to Big

Mama's House: Historic Preservation, Memory, and African-American History," *Forum Journal* (2014): 27.

73. Mooney, "The Comfortable Tasty Framed Cottage," 54.

74. Price, "The Path to Big Mama's House," 29.

75. Don Mitchell, "Cultural Landscapes: Just Landscapes or Landscapes of Justice?," *Progress in Human Geography* 27, no. 6 (2003): 787–96.

76. Cari Goetcheus, "What's Next for Historic Landscape Preservation," in *Exploring the Boundaries of Historic Landscape Preservation*, ed. Cari Goetcheus and Eric McDonald (Clemson, S.C.: Clemson University Digital Press, 2008): 193.

77. Longstreth, *Cultural Landscapes*.

78. Goetcheus, "What's Next for Historic Landscape Preservation," 195.

79. Goetcheus, 197.

80. A. Diop and R. Fraser, "A Community-Based Forestry Approach to Poverty Alleviation in Alabama's Black Belt Region," *International Forestry Review* 11, no. 2 (2009): 186–96; J. Gan, S. H. Kolison, and N. O. Tackie, "African-American Forestland Owners in Alabama's Black Belt," *Journal of Forestry* 101, no. 3 (2003): 38–43, <https://academic.oup.com/jof/article/101/3/38/4608661>. This practice has been promising in black settlements within Alabama's forests.