

BOX 9.1 FINDING CHILDREN IN THE PAST: CHILDREN'S GRAFFITI AT POLLY HILL PLANTATION

Archaeologists have often failed to consider the material traces left behind by children in the past. Dr. Jane Eva Baxter of DePaul University has attempted to address this issue in her numerous publications and research projects on the subject. One particularly innovative project Baxter has undertaken concerns the archaeology of children at Polly Hill Plantation, which is located on San Salvador in the Bahamas.

San Salvador has a complex history, including occupation by British Loyalists in the late 1700s, who brought native-born African slaves and Creole slaves from the Caribbean and the Southeastern United States. While San Salvador's enslaved population were emancipated in 1834, many of them remained marooned on San Salvador and other islands because they did not have the finances to return

back to their homelands. In the 1950s, the United States military built two bases in the region, marking renewed outsider presence and occupation at San Salvador.

During Baxter's research at Polly Hill Plantation, she discovered two buildings featuring incised graffiti that depict ships. The first building was used to house the enslaved who worked at or near the manor house; this building only had one graffito. The second building was a former office and industrial processing building; this building had over 25 graffiti. Baxter believes that some of this graffiti may have been the work of formerly enslaved children post-emancipation. How did she come to this conclusion? For one, Baxter, who is 5'2" tall, observed that much of the graffiti was not at her eye level, nor could the

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