

Plaster from Walls and Ceilings

The walls and ceilings of the 1799 Main House were coated, or parged, with plaster, which may have been decorated with plain pigments of bands of color. Archaeological recovery of plasters is one of the ways we will be able to figure out the style of the house in terms of its interior decoration. Excavations in the summer of 2021 recovered a large quantity of plaster, which will provide tremendous analytical potential.



Figure 1. Can you see the two colors on this fragment of plaster? (*photo credit: Sara Bon-Harper, James Monroe's Highland*)



Figure 2. The shapes and varied colors of plaster recovered in the excavation provide great analytical potential. The 2021 excavation produced dozens of bags of plaster fragments like these. *(photo credit: Sara Bon-Harper, James Monroe's Highland)*

Artifact Based Questions

1. How can plaster fragments be used to reimagine the 1799 Main House?
2. What does plaster reveal about the buildings construction and design?
3. How can the colors remaining on the plaster be used to paint a more accurate picture of James Monroe's wealth and standing in society?