

Petersburg National Battlefield VirtualCache Program

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Site 14: Kitchen and Laundry House

N 37°19'0.444"

W 77°16'39.459"



Built between 1800-1825 this structure was critical to the running of the Appomattox plantation. The large room on the north end was the kitchen with the laundry room on the south side. The staircase in the laundry room lead up to two small rooms believed to be the last of the slave quarters on the Eppes' plantation.

All the cooking for the Eppes family, the house slaves, the field slaves on this part of the plantation, and the food for the Eppes' parties came from here. Since their prestige rested in part on the success of these occasions, the cook in this kitchen could command some respect and authority in dealing with Mrs. Eppes. In turn, it also placed the cook atop the hierarchy of the slave community on this plantation.

Doing the laundry was an intensive job that took days to clean just one piece of clothing. For a laundress the mending and the boiling, the soaking and the scrubbing, and the starching and drying was one more way of being controlled on this plantation.

During all this work the different generations of women who worked here, and may have lived upstairs, used these rooms to pass down their skills, knowledge and history.

Visit Instructions: What is the cook preparing for dinner in the kitchen?