

25. PIECING IT ALL TOGETHER

*Thousands of tiny, seemingly insignificant, details,
when put together, create a picture of life at Bloomsbury
during the Revolutionary War era*

The distinction between commodity production and subsistence farming is very real; a farmer's first requirement is to feed his family and then to pay the landlord and the tax collector. Consumer goods in traditional farming communities typically were obtained on "store credit" to be satisfied when crops came in, if there was enough money.

A farmer could, of course, buy beyond his means, with predictable economic consequences. Tenant farmers and smallholders typically were in chronic debt to town storekeepers, who not infrequently acquired farms by foreclosure or to settle debts. Smyrna storekeeper James McMullen obtained the project site in 1772, probably in this manner.

But everyone who lived in the country was not a farmer. Some, maybe the majority, were farm workers who were paid for their labor and were permitted to live on the property in the ancient tradition of cottagers. These people should not be expected to have assemblies of material goods that resemble those of owners or tenant farmers. Much of modern archaeological research has been devoted to attempts at defining class and status from material remains.

When seeking the meaning of any collection of goods, the context must be considered. Objects may have different meanings, depending upon context. Bloomsbury was littered with contextual red herings that could have (and may have) led interpretations down false trails. Food preferences, re-use of glass, organization of space, and teawares were among the evidences that could have been interpreted several different ways.

EVIDENCE OF ETHNICITY

People of different ethnic groups occupied all the rungs on the social and economic ladder. A European-American ruling class stood at the top of the political hierarchy, but those below constituted a cross section, nuanced by distinguishing characteristics we can only suspect today.

Ethnic affiliation is one of archaeology's most elusive moving targets. Common sense suggests that a person's inherited foodways or other living habits should be expressed archaeologically. Such is not always the case. Whenever a researcher believes he or she has isolated a "marker" for the presence of a particular ethnic group, it seems, either the marker or the ethnic group disappears.

Such was the case with wild game remains at Bloomsbury. One would expect Native American people living in rural areas to betray some ancestral preference for venison, muskrat, and other game. In fact, game was a minor element in the Bloomsbury diet, but personal or ethnic preference may not have been the determining factor in meat choice. Game resources, including deer, had been decimated by the fur trade, and the wild animals' niche in the ecology was occupied by hogs and other introduced domesticates (Rountree 1990:145; Bowen 1996:100).

In contrast, archaeologists working at the Moravian/Lenape colony at Fairfield on the Thames in Ontario, Canada (1792-1813), reported a very clear distinction between white and native foodways during this same period. They found game bones in Indian houses and relatively more abundant beef bones in homesites of European settlers.



Figure 193
Fine creamware tea service

Elaborate sprigged creamware tea service vessels were found in the vicinity of the house, associated with relatively late, post-Revolutionary features.

Food bones in Indian houses had been broken for marrow removal, while Europeans' meat bones had been sawed (Jury 1945: 1). Such clear-cut ethnic distinction is uncommonly discovered, at best.

In fact, smashing bones for marrow was not necessarily an Indian trait. A cookbook from Boston included bone crushing for the purpose of extracting marrow for soup stocks (Lee 1832:211).

Use of game may not necessarily be an ethnic indicator. Virginia research has indicated that settlers' reliance on game decreased during the late seventeenth century as the stock of domesticated meat sources increased with time (Outlaw 1990). When Virginia sites of various social levels were compared (Barber 1981), all were eating beef, but in different ways. Wealthier people ate better cuts of beef, while the poor ate the less desirable cuts and relied more on pork and mutton (Kelso 1984:181).

In the Chesapeake, even during the seventeenth century, beef represented 44% of the Anglo-American diet, pork 25%, and mutton 1%. By the late eighteenth century,

domestic meats dominated the Chesapeake diet, and beef was the most popular meat source. Head and limb meat was used by all social classes (Bowen 1996:95, 119).

It therefore follows that a preponderance of domesticated meat sources could be a rough measure of settlement maturity, and the resulting scarcity of wild food sources, rather than indication of status or ethnicity. Higher status may be indicated by the presence of better cuts of beef, or by a preponderance of beef rather than other species.

At Bloomsbury, beef was the dominant meat source during the early period, but pork predominated in later features. The faunal analyst noted the absence of the pork cuts that normally were smoked or salted for commerce, which may indicate that the residents sold their marketable cuts of pork and ate the parts that were not usually processed for sale. In either period, foodways at Bloomsbury were more like the European-American than the Native American patterns.

Faunal analysis weakens when one asks what happened to organ meat. The "desirable" cuts were largely muscle meat, which can be quantified by counting bones. A wholesome and tasty traditional diet consisting largely of sausage, tripe, chitterlings, scrapple, souse, head cheese, and pigs feet will leave only a few bones in the archaeological record, consisting mostly of head and foot elements like those found at Bloomsbury. Since salt pork was legal tender, it follows that the hogs' bony parts were more valuable for trade than for food.

Only the presence of flaked glass speaks unequivocally of non-European craft survivals. Comfortable as this assumption might be, it is possible that there was a European tradition of using broken glass as a tool. Even today, glass is used to smooth the surfaces of fine furniture, and glass has

been used in recent times to smooth tool handles, among both Native American and German-American communities. This use does not, however, produce the kind of flaking seen on the tools recovered here.

Similarly, some researchers had previously asserted that hand-built “colono” pottery and the Chesapeake dugout log canoes were survivals of prehistoric crafts, when subsequent research has shown that both technologies were known also to European and African settlers, and the modern crafts are probably creolizations borrowing from all three of our ancestral cultures (Heite 1993).

ECONOMIC STATUS

Preference for stylish English ceramics has been interpreted as reflecting “middle class status,” whatever that means.

George Miller has tried to quantify economic status by assigning relative values to various nineteenth-century English ceramics at different times, based upon trade prices (Miller 1980). This scaling system, which has evolved over the years, is most useful during the middle years of the nineteenth century. It has occasionally been applied to sites as early as Bloomsbury (Bograd 1991), but it requires large assemblages, with reliable vessel counts on which mean ceramic dates can be calculated, which are absent. It is not easy to calculate a vessel count from the fractured sherds in plowzone collections, like much of the Bloomsbury material.

Finer ceramics at Bloomsbury reflect economic capabilities and social awareness parallel to Charles Robinson of Ap-

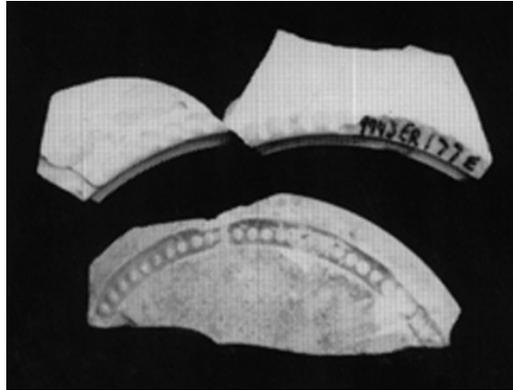


Figure 194

The beaded-pattern creamware lid, below, fits the sherds of a vessel, possibly the rim of a sugar bowl, with a beaded edge. The lid has been in a fire, and all the glaze is gone, leaving it in a grey biscuit condition. They are vessels C-15 and C-16, shown actual size, found near the east well site.

poquinimink Hundred, one of the “middling” sort who worked his own farm (MAAR Associates 1996). The Robinson site’s excavators concluded that the fine artifacts indicated Robinson was living above his means, but it is equally possible that fine goods and genteel practices penetrated farther down the economic and social scale than might have been expected.

At the Maryland home of free black scientist Benjamin Banneker, ceramics purchased before 1771 included porcelain, tin-glazed earthenware, and Rhenish stoneware, all of which

were absent from his later purchases. Banneker’s ceramic purchases after 1771 were dominated by English refined wares, which represented 51% of his total store account (Peters 1986). The shift to English fine ceramics has been interpreted to mark Banneker’s rise in status and his entry into “polite” company.

At the beginning of this project, we began with the assumption that the occupants were poor people, on the edge of poverty, because they were tenants living on poor ground in a log house with no foundation.

Instead, we found people who were relatively poor, but they were aware of fashion and responded to style changes. Other assumptions about status and material culture also collapsed under the weight of recently developed data.

EVIDENCE OF SOCIAL STATUS

Ceramic status analysis is currently a fashionable subject for debate in the archaeological theory community. It has been

suggested that social and economic status are identical, and can be interpreted on the basis of ceramic “choice” alone (Bograd 1991:53).

Status in eighteenth-century Kent County has been studied from the documentary point of view by Richard Bushman (1992), who went beyond mere economic scaling. Some of the families in Pumpkin Neck were discussed by Bushman.

Social status is much less easily defined than economic status. It is so ephem-

eral that some believe it cannot be interpreted through the concrete evidence of archaeology. A person’s standing in a community is a product of family, personal achievement, and reputation (Veech 1996). Social status played a role in several events during the site’s history.

Mrs. Axell, who was poverty-stricken through her long widowhood, apparently retained a position in the community that had been bestowed by her family relationship. Mrs. Axell’s encroachment on a nearby farm was tolerated by her neighbor,

and her brother made up the deficiency in her husband's estate accounts. Her daughters both took second husbands whose social status was substantial, if not quite as high as her own relations'. Her embittered, illiterate, son claimed that his only friend was his wealthy kinsman to whom he left the land. If anyone in the family had no need for more land, it was John Allee.

William Sappington was the black sheep of a substantial Eastern Shore Maryland family, but he personally had no status to speak of in Kent County. His widow, Agness, may have been well connected, for she eventually married the wealthy and literate farmer who had underwritten her administrations of the estates of the two earlier husbands.

Outward symbols of gentility, such as tea drinking, were nominally present, but not in enough quantity to indicate a gentleman's social life. Those who participated in *fashionable dining* were expected to be able to seat ten or more people for dinner, according to one measure (Veech 1996:69). Even without such wealth, inhabitants of Bloomsbury were able to take tea in white china with silver spoons and eat from white plates, but only by themselves or with a very few guests. Consequently, they were unable to advertise their gentility to more than a few guests at tea time.

The tea set's family clearly tried to maintain the appearance of a beaded creamware "set" even as replacement pieces became cruder and less readily available, but they could not set a table for large companies. In contrast, the William Strickland site yielded 21 knives, which indicates that the family expected to provide one knife per place setting for a large party at table.

Military sites should be an excellent laboratory for analysing status, because no aspect of American society is so rigidly stratified. Sites from Revolutionary War, which occurred during Bloomsbury's occupation, have been analysed in some detail. Allowing for regional differences, materials

from the winter 1782-1783 New Windsor Cantonment in New York provide a basis for comparison (Fisher 1987).

Pearlware, particularly the underglaze blue handpainted variety, was found at New Windsor, one of the earliest occurrences of the ware in America. It was absent from other wartime American military collections at Valley Forge, Fort Stanwix, and Fort Independence, among others. At New Windsor, pearlware was more or less evenly divided between regimental officers and enlisted, while the out-of-fashion creamware was marginally more common among enlisted men.

Creamware styles at Bloomsbury reflect the ware's entire period of popularity, from a finely potted thin creamer to a coarse saucer. The Cutlers probably were the creamware users, and may have introduced the underglaze painted pearlware from England soon after the wartime embargo ended.

While creamware appears to have been used on the site before the Revolution, evidence suggests that the beaded tea set was old when it was introduced, possibly handed down from a wealthier neighbor or bought at an estate auction.

Pearlware and creamware were roughly equal, representing about a third of the collected vessels. Their periods of marketplace popularity were also about equal, representing about half the site's period of occupation.

ABSENT ARTIFACT CATEGORIES

An old axiom states that absence of evidence is not necessarily proof of absence. Stated another way, you can't prove anything by a lack of proof.

Tillage tools and harness are virtually missing from the site, and there was no evidence for a barn in the homelot vicinity. Site occupants clearly were engaged in productive crafts, including spinning and leatherwork. For these activities, clear evidence was found. But where were the lighting fixtures? How did they work at night?

FARM IMPLEMENT PRESENCE AND ABSENCE

*Name of Site Type of occupancy Source Spades or Hoes Stirrups Sickles Lighting
and (approximate) period shovels or bits Location*

Bloomsbury			0	0	0	1	0	Del.
Angelica	prosperous farm 18th c.	Elder 1991	0	2	4+	0	0	S. Md.
Cazier tenancy	gatekeeper lodge 19th c.	Hoseth et al. 1994	0	0	0	0	53	Del.
Clay Bank	prosperous farm 17th c.	Noël Hume 1966a	1	3+	1+	0	1	Va.
Darrach Store	owner occupied 18th c.	DeCunzo et al. 1992	1	0	1	0	0	Del.
Marlborough	great house 18th c.	Watkins 1968	0	1	3	1	0	Va.
Massie Farm	owner occupied 19th c.	Linebaugh 1991	0	2	0	0	1	Va.
Pemaquid	settlement site 17th c.	Camp 1975	0	0	2	0	0	Maine
Red Bank	owner occupied 18th c.	MAAR 1988 0	0	0	1	0		N. J.
Robinson	owner occupied 18th c.	MAAR 1996 0	0	0	3	0		Del.
Rosewell	great house 18th c.	Noël Hume 1962	0	3+	0	1+	0	Va.
Strickland	slaveholder farm 18th c.	Catts et al. 1995	0	1	3	0	1	Del.
Tutter's Neck	yeoman house 18th c.	Noël Hume 1966b	0	0	1+	1	0	Va.

It stands to reason, from our historical vantage point and our advanced technology, that virtually everyone in the boondocks needed a horse or a mule in order to do any business whatever; certainly we would not expect to routinely walk into Smyrna from Pumpkin Neck every time we wanted to buy something at the store. It also seems reasonable to believe that country people would own plows, hoes, and other tillage tools.

But maybe our twentieth-century assumptions are incorrect. A series of alternate hypotheses suggest themselves:

Maybe poor farmers went to town only on Wednesdays and Saturdays because those were legally and traditionally established sale days when they could hitch a ride on a more prosperous neighbor's wagon.

Maybe a walk of three miles, one way, into Smyrna was not considered a hardship, since it could be done in less than an hour.

Maybe farm laborers, as opposed to tenants who rented farms, did not own and keep implements around their houses.

Maybe poor people needed no light except from their open fireplaces; did they do most of their work outdoors in natural light? Is artificial light an indicator of literacy?

Such issues are difficult, probably impossible, to resolve from negative evidence at one site. Moreover, a modern researcher must consciously avoid projecting his or her own points of view onto the site occupants.

One might postulate that a tenant who rented a farm would assemble a household inventory similar in most respects, if on a smaller scale, to a landowning farmer. A hired hand, or laborer, might be expected to accumulate goods more like those of a slave on a southern plantation, but with more evidence for objects associated with paid work.

To test these theories, a literature review was in order (table, above). Few published site reports contain detailed inventories of non-ceramic artifacts, but it was possible to assemble a group of reports from sites where the agricultural implements had been catalogued, at least to the level of presence and absence, if not reported in absolute quantities and detail. In only one report, Marlborough, Virginia, the author had compared the quantities in the archaeological collection against quantities in documented inventories and accounts from the site.

Sappington owned a hoe, horse furniture, and a plow (chart, page 34), but none of these was identified among the discards we found on the site. Since an estate inven-

This map illustrates the distribution of three types of vessel glass on the site, and speaks volumes about how glass vessels were used and re-used at Bloomsbury. Wine bottle fragments in the surface were concentrated near the wells. Case bottles were distributed in the surface material around the southeast perimeter of the presumed house location, indicating an activity area there. A small amount of other vessel glass is found near the burned area that is presumed to be the hearth, and a larger concentration of the same material is found in the southwest, a presumed outdoor disposal area. Association of the wine bottle fragments with the wells may indicate that the bottles were broken during re-use in a water-related activity.

tory lists the artifacts that were not lost, and the archaeological inventory reflects only discards, the two sources might be expected to differ radically. Even though horse furniture was not found on the site, Otter found some equine bones in the garbage. Dead or alive, there was a horse on the site.

There are several ways that broken or obsolete artifacts might be removed from the archaeological record of a site. Salvage has been cited to explain the absence of pewter dishes. Wrought iron was easily recycled by any blacksmith, which can explain

absence of discarded iron tools. Estate inventories of the period usually contain reference to a “lot of old iron,” and even today, farmers are reluctant to part with their collections of potentially useful scrap metal.

Cast iron, on the other hand, could be recycled only by a foundry, or by a finery forge. This fact may explain why the largest scrap iron pieces on the site were from cast iron pots. Today we can recycle either form of iron in a blast furnace, but foundries and furnaces capable of recycling cast iron were uncommon during the eighteenth century.

Pewter, an alloy of mostly tin with a small amount of copper, was aggressively recycled, which probably explains its absence from the site. Pewter dishes and spoons frequently appear in estate inventories, together with weighed lots of pewter scrap. Spoon molds for recycling pewter are reported from several sites, and one is listed in a nearby estate inventory. Some low-grade pewter contained lead, but the London standard was 96% tin and 4% copper (Larson 1997).

Recycling easily explains the absence of documented or expected metal objects, but other materials, like wooden “treen” dishes, tinware, and basketry mostly rotted away, and may be serendipitously preserved. A very few specimens have survived aboveground in collections to prove that they once existed, but in disproportionately small quantities. Other artifacts may become unrecognizable, like the individual pieces of tinware, and thereby omitted from site interpretations.

Given these caveats, a few conclusions can be proposed. Only four of the surveyed site excavations listed on page 324 were from the Delaware valley, while most of the rest were from the Chesapeake, where the culture was different in many ways. Hoes, for example, are common on Chesapeake sites, but were scarce from the Delaware Valley site collections. Sickles, the only agricultural implement found at Bloomsbury, also were found on half the other sites.

This data suggests that Chesapeake tobacco farmers might have owned more hoes, while grain farmers of the Delaware valley were more likely to own sickles. This would be a useful line of future research, but the evidence from this site alone is not sufficient.

The many differences between Delaware and Chesapeake cultures have not yet been fully explored and meaningfully quantified, but suggestions of such differences

indicate that this is another area ripe for future research.

THE SMOKING-PIPE QUESTION

Another absent or near-absent category is the white clay (often miscalled “kaolin”) tobacco pipe. On Chesapeake sites, clay pipes are among the most abundant artifacts. It is not unusual in Virginia for a plowed site to be visually distinguished by a patch of white clay pipes. On the Delaware, no such concentration has been reported. Only one whole pipe bowl (Figure 124 h, page 214) was found at Bloomsbury. A marked heel from another bowl was found in the late-period overburden of the western well (182h).

This difference in pipe frequency is but one of the many differences between the material cultures of the two adjacent watersheds. Delawareans certainly were addicted to the weed, but they must have used a nicotine delivery system that has not survived in the archaeological record.

Several explanations have been offered for the relative absence of clay pipes. Wooden or corn-cob pipes have been suggested, or possibly cigars and snuff. Such perishable delivery systems have not been reported from wet sites, however. Considering the large number of wells that have been archaeologically retrieved, one would expect at least a few specimens of non-ceramic smoke delivery devices. Maybe the tin snuff box (Figure 146 a, page 243) is a clue to the local preference.

Aside from the difference in pipe frequencies, there was a decided difference in ceramic preferences between the James River and the Delaware. On the Delaware, typified by the ceramics at Bloomsbury, locally produced red earthenwares dominated the food-preparation categories, whereas domestic and imported stonewares are more common in Virginia. Built-up, low-fired unglazed pottery, called *colono ware*, is almost absent from sites on the Delaware.

The post holes and post molds, shown here as shaded dots, were scarce on the site. Only two linear arrangements of posts, identified here by dashed lines, could be detected. In most archæological sites, post holes and post molds are a major source of architectural evidence. Most of the posts on the site probably were not related to structures and fences. Instead, they appear to have been parts of temporary structures associated with projects, such as butchering. The cluster around the wells probably falls into this category.

SANITATION AND WATER

Human waste is something of an open question in Delaware archæology. Privies are notably absent from the recapitulation of excavated sites (pages 131-132), and they remain unreported from eighteenth-century sites that clearly were occupied by “genteel” folk who observed such niceties as the tea ceremony, including the contemporary Robinson Site (MAAR Associates 1996).

Today, even the poorest homesite has some kind of human-waste disposal, at least consisting of a pit privy, or so it seems. A study in northern Mississippi (Smith, Barton

and Riordan 1982:53) combining archæology with oral history described a twentieth-century farmstead where the occupants “took to the woods” to satisfy their “bathroom needs.”

A privy reported from an early twentieth-century Arkansas site (Stewart-Abernathy 1986:137) had no pit, but was butted up against the chicken yard so that the chickens could keep it clean. Such installations were called “surface privies.” An informant interviewed for the Arkansas study revealed that Ozark farmsteads lacked privies and at schools, “Boys went one direction, and girls the other.”

A subject cloaked in euphemism, even in scholarly reports, is likely to be misreported, which appears to be the case with privies. Literature about privies tends to pay more than lip service to scatological humor, even when the author's approach is supposed to be serious. Popular books on the subject have had self-consciously shock-value titles like *Clean and Decent* (Wright 1960), or *The Porcelain God* (Horan 1996), or just *Dirt* (McLaughlin 1971). Within this context, it is difficult to seriously pursue comparative literature on a broader scale.

Modern sensibilities about waste and cleanliness cannot be applied retrospectively to interpretation of sites occupied before the germ theory of disease was widely understood. Several chamber pots are the sole evidence for sanitary waste removal.

Water sources at Bloomsbury are likewise a mystery. Analysis of the artifact inventory indicates that people were living on the site before the first well was dug and after the second well was backfilled.

The west well apparently was dug about the time the widow Agness Sappington left the site, probably for Axell's tenants. It was eventually used as a dump or privy and then backfilled.

The next well was dug and lined with timber around 1800, possibly as late as the Francis Denney takeover in 1801. The log that was found in the well was cut in 1806, providing a *terminus post quem* for the filling of the well. Denney's tenants, John Sisco and later Thomas Consealor, would have used this well, although there is evidence that it was sealed before the site was abandoned, as late as 1814. Some mean ceramic dates on the site are newer than the mean ceramic dates of well backfilling, which suggests that an alternate water source was tapped during the last period of occupancy.

Between, before, and after the wells there must have been other relatively convenient water sources for the occupants.

Another well is unlikely because its location would have been betrayed by the inevitable scatter of artifacts and chemical footprints associated with its use. We must therefore assume that water seeped out of the ground nearby in sufficient quantity, reliability and purity to obviate the need for a well. Before the woods were cut, more springs should be expected here. But where did the people get their water?

The answer to this question may lie in ethnohistorical research among smallholders at Bay Springs in Mississippi. In that study, the wells were located as near as a few feet from the house, and as far as 25 feet away. Informants stated that springs could be farther away from the house than wells. At one site, springs were 40 and 70 feet from the house; another family had access to seven nearby springs (Smith, Barton and Riordan 1982: 218-219). A distant spring, which required less effort to develop, might have been equally as desirable as a well dug next to the house.

SPATIAL DISPOSITION

Robert Keeler has observed that seventeenth-century Chesapeake homelot sites were generally divided into two parts, more or less on the same pattern as the modern suburban lot. He observed the persistence of a clean "front" yard and a cluttered working "back" yard in both instances (Keeler 1978:134).

Keeler noticed that seventeenth-century Chesapeake sites lacked purposely-dug trash pits, but that such features are common on eighteenth-century sites (Keeler 1978:136). He remarked that this difference "may reflect the difference in concepts of orderliness and structure between the attitudes of the seventeenth century and the Georgian tradition of the eighteenth century." Bloomsbury, which was occupied during the Georgian period, lacked this presumed marker.

Keeler also considers simple yards with few if any outbuildings to be a seven-

teenth-century characteristic. Again, the Bloomsbury site reflects this less modern characteristic. If the site occupants were keenly aware of style and fashion in ceramics, would they not be equally keen on architectural styles? Probably not, if they were renters or sharecrop tenants. If they could not own their houses, they would not be likely to improve them beyond the necessities. An investment in furniture, ceramics, and clothing would be the logical way to express personal ambitions through the disposition of disposable income.

Bloomsbury deviates from a postulated agricultural settlement model suggested elsewhere in the community (Heite and Heite 1985:25). According to the model, a farmer would live on the edge of the best arable soils. At Bloomsbury, on the other hand, the house was built on the only well-drained and potentially productive agricultural ground, surrounded by poorly-drained Othello soils.

Drainage probably began with the Axell division trench, which was silted-in and reopened several times. This ditching, soon after 1770, may have made the land more arable. Between Mark Mc-Call's 1771 survey of the Axell division and his son's survey of the Francis Denney estate in 1812, the land was converted from woodland into cultivated fields. Sometime after 1812, Abraham Allee built a house on the present site, at the edge of the property in keeping with the suggested model for agricultural toft siting.

Sappington had been a woodcutter. Mrs. Axell's complaint about his cutting the woods and the presence of timbering tools in his estate indicate that he was in the business of harvesting the oak forest that originally covered the site. Between 1767 and 1812, the character of the property changed with altered land use. By 1814, Thomas Con-sealor could speak in his lawsuit of his fenced agricultural land. The old house location was no longer appropriate, and it was abandoned.

FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

Several researchers have tried to analyse artifacts by function or by large pattern or group. Each attempt has yielded insights that add dimensions to our knowledge. Unfortunately, each alternative method requires different techniques for tabulating artifact collections. The result is an array of potential interpretive tools that are difficult to use together.

The traditional organization of archæological artifact discussions, which was followed in this report, is to organize by material of manufacture, such as glass, ceramics, and metal. Valid as this organization may be from a taxonomic or descriptive point of view, it fails to describe the uses and impacts of the artifacts being described.

A functional organization, such as the one suggested by Susan Saastamo (box) has the advantage of allowing a researcher to discuss artifacts in their context of use, rather than of manu-

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Functional Organization
of Artifacts
(after Saastamo 1971)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Personal Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Clothing B. Footwear C. Adornment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jewelry 2. Cosmetics and Perfume D. Grooming E. Indulgences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tobacco 2. Alcohol 3. Drugs 4. Gambling F. Personal Ritual G. Infant Care II. Domestic Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Furnishings B. Housewares and Appliances III. Construction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Construction materials B. Hardware C. Tools D. Fixtures IV. Commerce and Industry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Agriculture B. Hunting C. Trapping D. Fishing E. Collecting F. Logging G. Mining and quarrying H. Manufacturing I. Commercial services V. Group Services VI. Group Ritual VII. Military |
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facture. If we are concerned with the user, rather than the manufacturer, Saastamo's approach makes excellent sense. Early archaeologists were writing for curators and collectors, who tended to organize collections by material or by source. Today's archaeologist is concerned first with observing and interpreting the people who used the artifacts in the site context, who organized their surroundings by function, as suggested in Saastamo's outline.

Stanley South took a somewhat different but complementary approach, by identifying usage "patterns" in artifact assemblages. He developed a "frontier" and a "Carolina" pattern to describe the mixture of artifacts from a site. Each pattern is composed of groups, the relationship among which will vary according to the pattern (South 1978). South's approach was used successfully in Delaware by one of the present authors (Wise 1978) at the State House excavations in Dover.

South divided artifacts into eight groups, and attributed a generalized percentage range to each pattern:

Kitchen	Architecture
Furniture	Arms
Clothing	Personal
Tobacco	Activities

Outside the State House project, few Delaware archaeologists have used the South patterning technique. There is, therefore, no developed local pattern like South's Carolina pattern that could be used for reference at Bloomsbury.

Anne Yentsch (1990) sought to chart the evolution of food traditions during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, using minimum vessel counts within functional categories. During the period from settlement to 1799, Yentsch found, wares associated with tea and other "new" beverages increased from negligible amounts to a major component. Her samples ended about 1740, before Bloomsbury was occupied.

From the evidence, it appears that the trend continued after the date of the last Yentsch sample. Bloomsbury's 50.6% of tea wares exceeds the percentage on any of the sites Yentsch sampled, including her very high status sites. Her highest reported percentage of "new" beverage wares was 38% at the high-status Governor Charles Calvert site in Annapolis (1728-1735). While everyone agrees that tea wares became more common and penetrated down the social ladder as the eighteenth century progressed, such a high percentage at Bloomsbury seems top-heavy.

Teawares served a secondary function that is only hinted in the documents. In local probate inventories of this period, teaware is a separate category. The appraisers typically would identify teaware and dishes, sometimes teaware with furniture. In at least two local cases, the inventory listed teaware along with the other dishes, and then listed more teaware on the mantel. This secondary decorative function of old but attractive tea equipage has survived to the present day on the antique market, where individual service pieces often are sold without the cups and saucers that once accompanied them.

Bloomsbury's 16% of food consumption ceramics (plates and bowls, mostly) is just a little higher than the sites on the Yentsch list. It may reflect reliance on treen or pewter.

In the category of food preparation and storage, Bloomsbury ceramics resemble the earlier (pre-Georgian) New England and Chesapeake examples cited by Yentsch. At Bloomsbury there was a smaller percentage devoted to "traditional" beverages that would be served from coarser ceramic pitchers and jugs.

The Bloomsbury collection is smaller than most sites of the period. Relative collection size can be calculated in terms of vessels per year, which may be a measure of relative prosperity, or disposable income. When these numbers are compared,



Figure 198

Remains of industrial production

Basin-shaped pits, like this one, may be evidence of soap manufacture. The pit fill contained daub, and often animal parts as well. Post holes in the bottom are typical of this class of feature.

Bloomsbury exhibits a relatively sparse ceramic inventory.

This measure, employed by local archaeologists on a few sites (Grettlar, Miller, Catts, *et al.*, 1996) may prove to be a useful proxy for disposable wealth. Again, it has not been employed as widely as one might wish.

SUBSISTENCE

A cash crop was whatever could be sold, and subsistence agriculture meant deriving as much as possible from the bounty of the land. Delaware farmers boasted that they used the whole hog, except the squeal and the curl in the tail.

If most of a hog's muscle meat passed into the cash economy as salted or smoked pork or bacon, some Bloomsbury pits may represent further processing of the other parts. Soap could be made from the fat. Entrails and offal traditionally became scrapple and sausage, which could easily be

stored. Skin would be salted and sold for leather.

Remains on the site testify to the refinement of hog parts into useful products. Hog feet and head bones probably were discarded after the meat was removed to make sausage. The basin-shaped pits probably were used for leaching lye from wood ashes in preparation for making soap from hog fat.

Soapmaking equipment was common in the estate inventories of Bloomsbury contemporaries. In 1766, Abraham Barber's estate inventory included a cedar lye tub, which may be the same as Benjamin Brown's 1769 cedar soap tub. John Allee's 1771 inventory included a lye tub. The term "cedar ware" referred to cooperage including tubs and buckets intended for rough use in moist conditions.

The last cedar cooperage product commonly marketed in America was the hand-cranked ice cream freezer popular during the early twentieth century. Before the

advent of galvanized and plastic buckets, rot-resistant woods such as cedar and cypress were valued for many applications. Cedar and cypress forests were exploited by eighteenth-century Delaware farmers.

UTILITY OF CHEMICAL EVIDENCE

Chemical evidence is one of the most useful tools for spatial definition of house sites, especially where the other sources are ambiguous. The thirty-inch survey, taken at subsoil level, provided a sizable body of evidence, illustrated in chapter 11.

Results from Bloomsbury confirmed recent findings that it is not necessary to take samples from both the plowzone and the subsoil. Such two-level samples were taken at the Powell site, a few miles away. Interpretive maps from that site demonstrate uniformly that the subsoil sampling was more sharply defined and therefore more likely to point to feature locations. An excellent demonstration of the difference is the calcium survey at Powell (Grettler, Miller, Doms, Seidel, Coleman and Custer 1995:141).

Feature locations suggest a home lot of about 5,000 square feet, approximately 70 feet on a side. A fenced enclosure south of the wells may have been an animal pen. A twelve-foot square addresses the assumption that blue glass beads were “offerings” on the corners of the first house, presumably built by the Sappingtons. The line of window glass and the chimney stain may be remains of a later, larger, house.

Another local site, the Strickland plantation, exhibited striking similarities to the Bloomsbury chemical distributions (Catts, Custer, Jamison, Scholl and Iplenski 1995: 99). The high-phosphorous area at Strickland marked the “workyard” east of the house, as it did at Bloomsbury west of the house. Magnesium concentrations marking “over the fence” disposal were noted on the edges of both sites.

When the Bloomsbury thirty-inch chemical survey results are abstracted (Figure 199), they contribute to the definition of activity areas both in detail and in general. The subsoil survey clearly provides all the

necessary information, without the need for collecting redundant and imprecise data from the plowzone.

DOCUMENT RESEARCH RESULTS

Research for this project reflects a bottom-up approach to site history, as opposed to the more popular top-down approach espoused by many historians and anthropologists. The top-down approach is implicit in expansive theoretical systems known as the “new social history” and the “new archaeology,” which seek to discern broad generalities. The basic assumption of such theories is uniformity, which can be

deduced from samples, or possibly from the results of a single site.

By applying theoretical overlays to explain discoveries on particular sites, new archaeologists attempted to see similarities, rather than the variations that are inherent in the human experience. Unfortunately for the theoreticians, everyone is different, and every site is different. Most sites defy classification in one respect or another, but this variability

does not mean that archaeologists are wrong if they look for trends and uniformities.

Bottom-up researchers will intensively study particular sites and their inhabitants in detail and then relate them to the larger universe of survey data. At Bloomsbury, bottom-up research methods allowed the investigators to connect the site with the larger community, while explicating its peculiarities.

A researcher using the bottom-up approach begins with the particular, and does not immediately attempt to pigeon-hole the site and its occupants, before they have been fully revealed. When the site data is later compared to results from other sites, a robust comparison, rather than categorization, will result. Nonetheless, all sites belong to categories, with which they must be compared and contrasted.

Another successful documentary tool was the use of long-distance site comparisons. While it is tempting to make comparisons only among nearby sites, we drew parallels from distant as well as local sites

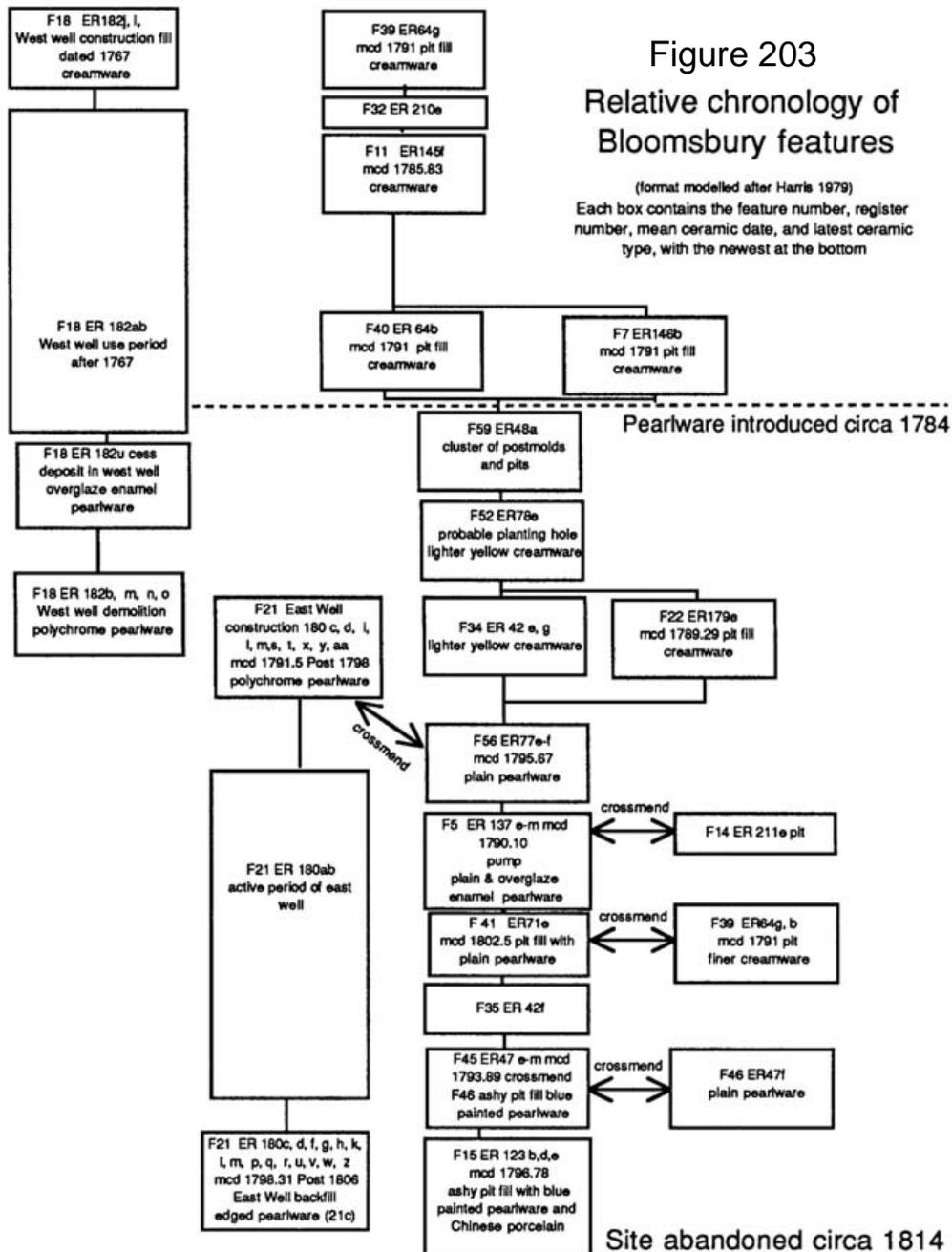
(page 130-131). This was done to avoid the trap of provincialism that easily descends into chauvinism, and to identify common cross-cultural strains among widely dispersed groups of people.

Such forays are important because distant human communities frequently display recognizable similarities as well as different solutions to similar problems. At the Bloomsbury site, several issues yielded well to distant comparison.

Blue beads, for example, are highly regarded in many different parts of the world, including many North American na-

tive communities and West Africa. Although some afrocentrist researchers have recently asserted that the preference for the color blue must be considered a mystical folkloric import from Africa, it is found in other groups around the world, to the point where the color blue is not a reliable cultural marker.

Although comparisons might not be so immediately obvious, it was useful to include statistics for homestead plans from Iceland and the Isle of Man, other branches of our Delaware cultural ancestry. In these two island communities, it is possible to glimpse ancestors of the Chesapeake homelot (Keeler 1977) and its yet-undefined but different Delaware counterpart. Much more needs to be done in this regard.



ARCHITECTURAL EVIDENCE

Subsurface architectural evidence was scanty at best, and most architectural inferences are derived from spatial dispositions and assumptions about homelot layout.

No storage pits or root cellars, inside or outside the house, were identified on the site, even though these are fairly common features of houses with no basements. It has been suggested that “tater holes” or underground root cellars are a characteristic of African-American sites, but they are equally common on sites of other affiliations, in areas with only European settlers. For example, such a wood-lined hole was found under the post-in-ground house built by Plymouth colony settlers on the Kennebec River in Maine during the eighteenth century (Cranmer 1990).

Persistent folklore in Virginia describes the “tater hole” branch of the Anglo-American Woodson family as descended from a child who was hidden in such a hole during the 1622 massacre.

Other researchers have suggested that subfloor holes in African-American sites served as strongboxes, rather than as butteries.

In any case, the absence or presence of a hole beneath the house floor at Bloomsbury cannot be endowed with too much ethnic significance.

The second version of the house was probably floored. Evidence for this statement is largely negative, consisting of a “hole” in the surface collected sample and the absence of features in the same area presumed to have been occupied by the house. A dirt-floored house would have harbored more fragments of broken dishes, for example. The two better-preserved halfpennies probably fell through the loose wooden floor and were protected.

A wattled and daubed chimney, possibly with a brick hearth, is revealed by sev-

eral pieces of evidence. First of these is the ubiquitous presence of burned daub fragments in the pits. Whenever a chimney is cleaned, fragments of brick or daub or other lining will be sloughed off and included in the ashy waste.

Other wattled and daubed chimneys have been betrayed by post holes that had supported corner posts for the chimney, but these were absent from the Bloomsbury site. In spite of the lack of this evidence, a daubed chimney seems the most likely interpretation, and the burnt spot seems the most likely location for it.

Bricks were found in a concentration near the east well, rather than near the chimney. These bricks probably were used to line the upper part of the well, since spalls of brick were found in the east well shaft wall. Some may have been associated with a wash house or other outbuilding.

DATA RECOVERY EFFECTIVENESS

Total excavation of a site implies complete data recovery, which is almost never actually the case. Sometimes “data recovery” may actually refer to a 10% or smaller sample of a site’s contents.

Intentionally or unintentionally, we all miss something on a site. The question is not the percentage of the materials collected, but the integrity of the conclusions that resulted from what was excavated. Since the site data is filtered through the mind, prejudices, and shortcomings of the excavator, no “data recovery” exercise can be a simple transfer of everything from the site into a report.

Technological shortcomings may contribute to recovery shortcomings. Because a quarter-inch screen is used in most cases, artifacts or pieces of artifacts less than a quarter-inch across are not recovered. When flotation samples are screened through window screen, a much higher level of recovery is possible. If it were practical to water-screen all the site soils, data recovery

Table of ceramics from features in relative chronological order (part one)

Feature Numbers:	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	17	(c) 18a	(u) 18b	(d) 18c	19	(c) 21a	(u) 21b	(d) 21c
Mean Ceramic Date					1790.1		1791				1785.83				1796.78					1791	1797	1798
fired clay (gm)	2.3				353.2	93.7	30.2	78.4	34.9	372.2	6.2	13.8	5.6	419.7	254.1							
case bottle	3				2					1	1											
wine bottle					1					8								2				
<i>South type number Sherd counts: and/or common ware name</i>																						
red engine turned																						1
5 "Canton"																						3
13 annular pearl																						1
15 lighter yellow creamware	1				1									17						16	5	6
17 underglaze blue painted pearlware														3				6		5	3	2
19 edged pearlware enamelled pearlware				1								1									1	
20 plain pearlware				4								1								1	5	
22 creamware					2	4				3												
local black glazed red earthenware		1			3	2		3	2	1			1	10	5							
local brown glazed red earthenware		2		5	39	2	1	1		2				9	5							
25 deeper yellow creamware					1													8				
34 scratch blue										1								1			1	
36 clouded					2												2					
49 delft													1									
56 slipware		1			2			2		2			6							1		
66 brown stone					1					1												
TOTALS	1	4		5	56	8	1	6	2	10			1	53	10	8	3	29	1	54	14	26

would be more complete, but even then there would be some loss.

For safety reasons, wells seldom are completely excavated, and the principal investigator must decide arbitrarily where the limits of search will be set.

Budget constraints and sometimes *ad hoc* cost-benefit decisions will determine which types of sample are taken from which features. At the end of the project, the investigators will have second thoughts, wishing that they had sampled chemicals from certain deposits, or flotation from certain other ones. But the nature of archæology is such that most retention decisions are irreversible, and there is no point in crying over spilt milk.

All these factors militate against any "data recovery" program actually recovering all the available data. Sometimes lacunae in the data are puzzling. If half of a certain dish is found in the well, where is the other half? Was it carried offsite to a disposal area we did not discover, or was it pulverized in the plowzone? We have no way of knowing, ever.

Regardless of what percentage of the original site area was recovered, we can be confident that most of the more important aspects of the site were revealed, if incompletely.

This confidence is based upon the fact that any large sample is likely to be representative in a site where artifacts are randomly scattered through the plowzone. While the plowzone artifacts reflect spatial relationships between parts of the site, the sheer number of fragments scattered through the plowzone will dictate that some, at least, of each ceramic type will be recovered, and probably in proportions reasonably close to the original distribution.

Any statistical sampling procedure will be an attempt to reduce this principle to a workable numerical value. In this case, we were collecting a proposed 100% sample that actually was perhaps a 95% sample. For purposes of interpreting the site, the difference is immaterial.

CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

Bloomsbury was occupied for a half century by three or four families, during a period when government and ceramic styles changed radically. The 59 numbered features on the site represent a history of roughly one ground disturbance a year. This is not a large number of holes, and they contained relatively few artifacts.

The problem, then, was to create a putative chronological sequence that would allow some kind of interpretation of change in the internal geography through time.

Because few features and deposits actually overlapped, it was not possible to construct a traditional stratigraphic sequence based on superposition. To work best, a Harris Matrix requires well-defined physical relationships between deposits, which did not occur at Bloomsbury.

The wells, of course, were stratified, and there were crossmends among feature deposits. A rough sequence based on the principles of the Harris Matrix was only marginally effective. Without clear sequences of deposits, and without convenient artifact or activity markers, it was possible only to divide the site into two rough periods and to delineate absolute sequences in only a few cases. Presence of pearlware is a marker for the post-revolutionary period.

Mean ceramic dates provided rough sequencing, but only an approximation of relative dating. There were not enough sherds, or enough pottery types, to apply the dating formula in most features. Inherent problems of the South dating technique have been rehearsed many times (Triggs 1993: 269), but in the absence of other seriation resources, it was employed in the process of compiling the chart.

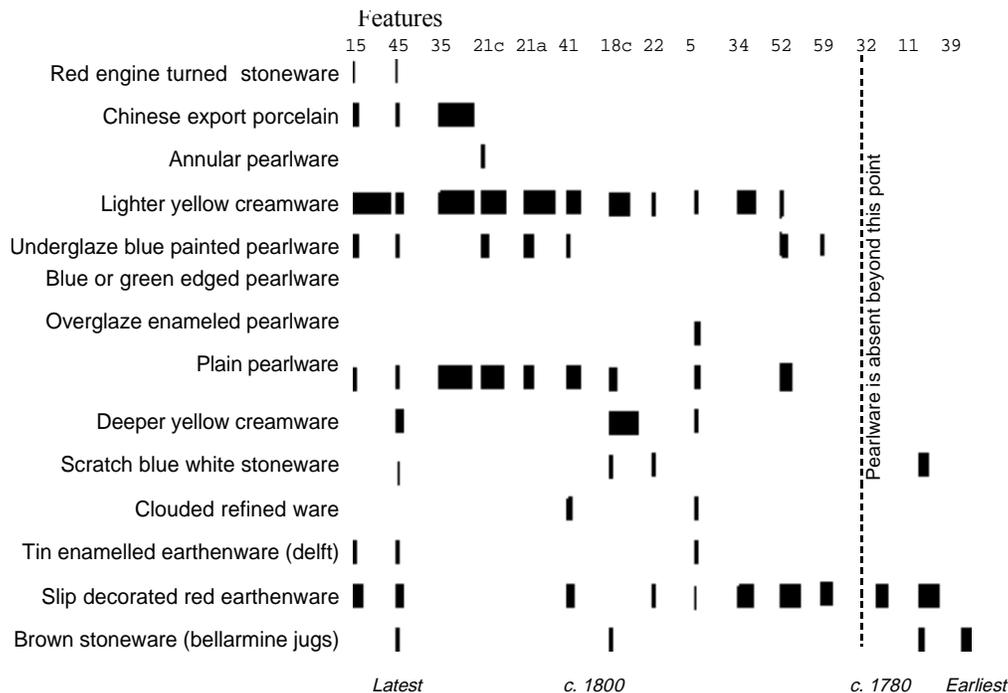


Figure 204

A proposed timeline for the features on the Bloomsbury site

Graphic representation of the temporal relationship between major features. Plain creamware, black-glazed red earthenware, and brown-glazed red earthenware have been eliminated from this chart because they occur in virtually every feature.

Feature Numbers	22	24	32	34	35	38	37	39	40	41	42	45	46	49	52	56	57	59
mean ceramic date	1789						1791		1791	1802.5	1793.89				1795.67			
fired clay (gm)	753.8	33.5	192.9	13.3	33.4		11.4	33.4	355.7		19.4	588.7	21.6	55	1.4	7.7	15.3	58.5
case bottle	1	1												3			1	
wine bottle	1							1	2	11						1	1	
<i>South type number Sherd counts: and/or common ware name</i>																		
red engine turned																		1
5 "Canton"					1							2						
13 annular pearl												1						
15 lighter yellow																		
creamware	1			1	1					3		8			1			
17 underglaze blue																		
19 edged pearlware										1		3						1
enamelled pearlware																		
20 plain pearlware				1					3		3	1		2	1			
22 creamware	10		1					12	2	4		14			3	2		3
local black glazed																		
red earthenware	10	1	4					1		2		17	3		3			12
local brown glazed																		
red earthenware	6		6	4			2	2		4	1	21		2	10	2	2	6
25 deeper yellow																		
creamware												8		6	1		1	
34 scratch blue	1											1						
36 clouded										1								
49 delft												3						
56 slipware	1		1	1				4	1	4		7		1	5	1		3
66 brown stone												2			1			
TOTALS	29	1	12	6	3	0	2	19	3	22	1	91	4	9	26	6	3	26

The table given here lists the ceramics from the features, ranked according to South's numerical sequence. Some changes have been made to account for local circumstances. A locally-made engine-turned glazed red stoneware was added at the top, or newest, end of the table. The local brown and black glazed pottery, which spanned the entire site occupation period, is placed in the middle of the list, with the generic creamware. Interestingly enough, these wares seem to fit in this place on the sequence list, but the sheer quantity of creamware overwhelmed the statistical determination of a mean ceramic date and skewed the results.

The tendency of generic creamware to skew mean ceramic dating was noted in a series of New York sites (Salwen, Bridges and Rothschild 1981:92).

When this sequence of wares was used, it allowed construction of a seriation graph (Figure 140). When features were sequenced by this method, the mean ceramic dates did not follow the same relative chronology, illustrated in the tables on pages 338

and 340. Of all features with enough sherds to analyse, features 35, 45 and 15 appear to be the newest. All contain "Canton" or Chinese export porcelain, a relatively recent ware that becomes common on no-elite sites after the Revolution. Annular pearlware, also relatively recent, was found in Feature 45 and the closure of the east well, listed as Feature 21c on the table. Based on this evidence, it appears that features 35, 45, and 15 are the newest on the site, and that they post-date the backfilling of the second well, Feature 21, no earlier than 1806. This was the period of the Conselor occupation. These features lie along the west fenceline, and appear to be associated with an activity area that is marked by an irregular, shallow soil disturbance that has been interpreted as a muddy area in the yard marked by a slight discoloration of the subsoil.

The heaviest concentrations of burnt daub were in features 45, 15, 22, 11 and 5, which appear to represent a wide range of dates. The first four of these are basin-shaped pits associated with shallow post-like

features. Feature 5 is the pump hole, which contained several pockets of discarded daub in the backfill.

If the daub-filled pits were created for rendering soap from home-made lye, which is the most likely explanation, then the later inhabitants of the site worked along the west side of the yard. Earlier pits, features 7, 32, 22, and 11, were concentrated along the southeast boundary of the yard, indicating a westward shift of soap making after the eastern well was dug.

DENDROCHRONOLOGY ISSUES

Every dating system has its drawbacks, and dendrochronology is no exception. The technique can tell us when a piece of wood stopped growing, but it cannot tell when it was actually used in construction. The oak clapboards of the well casings have been the principal sources for dating in this report, because there was some bark layer surviving.

Key-year dating, as explained in chapter 13 (page 173), places each piece of wood on a regional scale of dates, a composite tree-ring calendar. The dates derived from this technique at Bloomsbury seem somewhat counter-intuitive. A 1767 date for the west well casing boards may be correct, but it would be more likely that the well was dug when Cutler's house was being built, around 1775. The east well would be more likely to have been built after 1801, at the beginning of the Sisco occupation, rather than at the end of the Cutler period, in 1798.

It is entirely possible that the clapboards were cut several years before they were used; one might with justification be uneasy about the precision of applying a date derived from tree rings to the construction date of a structure in which the wood was used. These conflicts of evidence should serve to warn us that glib acceptance of any evidence without independent validation potentially can be misleading.

Interpreting the wells as Cutler's and Sisco's, dug by those tenants early in their

occupations, is more comfortable than placing them at the end of the Sappington era and at the end of the Cutler tenure.

MEANING OF TWIGS IN THE WELL

Twigs in the wells await further research. The twigs, which were chopped or broken into small pieces, were found in the well's waterlogged contents at the bottom. It has been suggested that the twigs were related to some extractive process, such as rendering twigs for dyestuffs or making medical potions or possibly tanning. Several hundred twigs have been preserved for further specialist study that might lead to identification of their original purpose.

Meriwether Lewis writes in his journal of the 1804-1806 expedition that he cured an intestinal disturbance and high fever by drinking water in which choke cherry twigs had been boiled. He directed his men to strip off the leaves and break the twigs into two-inch pieces (Ambrose 1996:255, 23). Lewis' mother, Lucy Marks, was a well-known herbalist in central Virginia. She taught her son all she knew.

Several woods, notably oak and hickory, common to the area were sources of tanning liquor. Bark, nuts, and leaves of the oak or walnut trees have been used as dyestuffs. Other common local woody plants used for dyeing include sassafras, sumac, mulberry, red cedar, grapevine, and hickory (Lesch 1970). Sassafras and some other woods were also used for medicine.

Thus any local woods could be cooked to extract useful liquors, and chopping into small bits would be a logical first step. The key to deciphering the twigs' purpose will rest in the circumstances rather than in determining the species of the wood.