

APPENDIX D
AMERICAN-MADE CREAMWARES

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AMERICAN-MADE CREAMWARES

The most unusual ceramics found at the McKean/Cochran Farm Site were 108 sherds from at least 11 plates made of a distinctive yellow earthenware body. Yellow-bodied refined earthenware vessels (commonly called yellowware) do not ordinarily appear on American archaeological sites before the 1830s, and do not appear in significant quantities until after mid-century. At the McKean/Cochran Farm Site the plates were excavated from Feature 1, in Stratum B, Level 2, in various units. Feature 1 was the cellar of a house built around 1800 and abandoned by 1830. Six isolated sherds were found in the plowzone and three small sherds came from the top level of Feature 27, a well abandoned about the same time as Feature 1.

The plate bodies are light yellow to buff colored and the glazes are clear. Surface colors include the following Munsell hues: 2.5Y 6/8, 5/6 and 7/6, and 10YR 6/8 and 5/6 (various shades of brownish yellow); and 5YR 5/6 and 5/8 (yellowish red).

The rims are decorated with shell edging, a style that is associated with English pearlware, creamware, and whiteware plates (Miller and Hunter 1994; Noël Hume 1970:116). Shell-edge-decorated pearlware and whiteware plates were the most common tablewares during the first half of the nineteenth century. Yellowware plates, however, were never a common form, and when seen are usually found to have been made with plain rims (McAllister and Michel 1993:97-98). There are other differences between these plates and standard yellowware vessels: their bodies are not as dense and vitrified; their foot forms, overall shapes, and body thicknesses resemble English refined earthenwares (pearlware and creamware); and their glaze is much more crazed than is typical for yellowwares.

The plates have two different rim decorations. The first is a simple shell-edge design that consists of a scalloped rim outline with straight lines colored with green that extend into the marli (rim). The lines were part of the mold or molds that were used to make the plates. The scalloped edge outline is regular, rather than uneven/rococo. This style of shell edge with straight lines is most commonly found on pearlware plates made during the first half of the nineteenth century (Miller and Hunter 1994). On pearlware, the lines can be colored with blue (most common) or green, or, infrequently, red, brown, purple, or yellow.

The second rim motif is found on octagonal plates (see Plate 19 in Chapter V). These vessels have straight rim outlines with a molded motif on the marli that imitates shell edge. Variations of this "shell edge within a straight border" design are also found on English creamware and pearlware, but they are less common than the standard "shell edge on the rim" motifs (Miller and Hunter 1994; Noël Hume 1973; Towner 1978).

Five vessels have the simple shell-edge rim decoration. Vessel 89A is a nine-inch-diameter plate which is very distinctive because of the two separate colors that go all the way through the body of

the vessel. The base is orange, the rim and cavetto (side) are yellow, and the edge is colored green. The glaze is clear and the color variations are probably caused by firing conditions; the same clay can fire to different colors, depending on the amount of oxygen available inside the kiln and the temperature reached during firing. This plate has triangular stilt marks on the base where it rested on supports, probably within saggars, in the kiln. Kiln supports leave small unglazed scars on vessels where they come into contact with the body. Vessel 89A is the most complete of the yellow-bodied plates in the assemblage, and it has only light wear on its surfaces.

Vessel 95A is another nine-inch-diameter plate; it does not completely mend, and the sherds are possibly derived from two vessels. The rim outline is a slightly irregular scallop with molded straight lines and green coloring. This plate exhibits wear marks, probably from stacking, along the angle where the marli turns into the cavetto. There are two sets of triangular stilt marks on the exterior base, and a single stilt mark on the interior face; the part of the vessel where the third set should be is missing. Vessel 96A is composed only of two rim sherds, but the lack of curvature in the rim edge indicates that it was an oval or rectangular dish or platter (i.e., a serving piece rather than a plate for individual food consumption). The rim edge is slightly scalloped, with straight lines colored green. This vessel also has wear along the angle where the marli and cavetto join. In addition to the numbered vessels, two MNVs were assigned to sherds with this simple shell-edge motif: one is an eight-inch-diameter plate and the other is a plate that is too fragmentary for measurement.

The octagonal plates, Vessels 90A through 94A, were probably made in one mold, since their forms are virtually identical. The mold (or possibly molds) might have been old and worn, because the designs are shallow and indistinct. The diameters are roughly seven inches. Even though the forms are so similar, there is variation in the colors of these plates: no two plates have identical hues, and one (Vessel 92A) has an imperfect, uneven glaze. The stilt marks are single, not triangular, and are found on the underside of the rims rather than on the face and base. There is wear at the joining areas of marlies and rims, and one plate (Vessel 94A), which has the most complete base, also shows wear along the foot ring. The octagonal plates are rather fragmentary: four are between 10 and 25 percent complete and one is between 25 and 50 percent complete. However, given the fragmentary nature of most of the vessels found in Feature 1, this condition is probably not indicative of unusual depositional circumstances.

The origin of these vessels is problematic. For the reasons noted above, they cannot be classified as yellowwares, but they are much too yellow to fit into the category of standard English creamwares. Nevertheless, they are found in Feature 1 with circa 1780 to 1820 creamware, pearlware, and Chinese porcelain vessels (see Tables 8 and 9 in Chapter V). Feature 1 also contained smaller amounts of earlier ceramic types, notably faience (tin-glazed earthenware), English white salt-glazed stoneware, and German gray stoneware. The latest datable ceramic type in Feature 1 is pearlware with transfer printing with stipple, which has a beginning manufacturing date of circa 1800. (These printed sherds do not appear in Table 8 or 9 because they were of unidentifiable forms.) The five sherds in this category are fragmentary but they represent at least two vessels. Underglaze polychrome painted and underglaze brown painted pearlware vessels, both

with beginning dates of 1795, are much more common: sherds from at least 41 polychrome vessels and four brown vessels are part of this deposit.

Pre-1830 yellow-bodied earthenwares have been found at other sites in the Middle Atlantic region, especially in Philadelphia. Sherds from a very similar green shell-edge plate were recovered from the Franklin Court Site in that city (William Liebknecht, personal communication 1997). This vessel was dated, based on its context, to between 1750 and 1780. The date is problematic, however, since this rim shape, as noted above, was not common on pearlwares until after 1800. A second, similar green-edged, scallop-rim-shaped plate (but without the molded lines) was recently excavated at the Metropolitan Detention Center Site, also in Philadelphia. This plate was found with creamwares, pearlwares, and Chinese porcelains in a privy that was filled between 1810 and 1818 (Dent et al. 1997:chapter V, 43-50). The privy fill has been correlated with a prosperous middle-class household. Another yellow-bodied vessel from this privy fill assemblage was a large (9 inches in height) plain pitcher, made in a form that is similar to plain creamware vessels. Also at the Metropolitan Detention Center Site, the remains of a barrel, probably used as a privy, held fill that included polychrome painted pearlware tea vessels and a yellow-bodied teapot with an engine-turned motif (an incised, linear design that is commonly found on English refined red-bodied teapots made circa 1760 to 1820) (Dent et al. 1997:chapter V, 75-76). At the Meadows Site in Philadelphia, sherds from hollowware vessels with unidentifiable forms were recovered from the same contexts as creamwares and pearlwares (LBA 1994:table 5.11), although their significance was not recognized at the time.

In Maryland, a surface collection from the Chick Farm Site near the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal included sherds from a yellow-bodied nappie (a cooking and serving dish) with a molded rim design that appears to have been copied from designs on whiteware manufactured after 1820 (George Miller, personal communication 1997).

It is possible that these vessels were made by local (i.e., Mid-Atlantic-region) potters in imitation of imported English tablewares. After the American Revolution, various groups of merchants and governmental organizations attempted to encourage American manufacturers to produce goods that would supply local markets with substitutes for goods made in England. These attempts were aided by the effects of Jefferson's 1807 Embargo Act and the blockade of east coast port cities by the British during the War of 1812. Potters were among the craftsmen-entrepreneurs who tried to manufacture merchandise that would fit the demands of consumers who were accustomed to English goods (Myers 1980:5-11). At that time (circa 1785 to 1815), the most popular types of tablewares were made of creamware (generally referred to in contemporary advertisements and accounts as queensware) and pearlware (also called China glaze).

One of the earliest attempts to encourage tableware production is cited by Edwin Atlee Barber (1907:25-26):

The Pennsylvania Society for the Encouragement of Manufactures and the Useful Arts published the following advertisement in the *New Jersey Journal* at Elizabethtown, in its issue of January 25, 1792:

"1. To such person as shall exhibit the best specimen of Earthenware or Pottery, approaching nearest to Queensware, or the Nottingham [an English stoneware] or Delf [delft] ware, of the marketable value of fifty dollars--a plate of the value of fifty dollars, or an equivalent in money . . ."

One of the conditions of this competition was that the ware should be made in Pennsylvania or New Jersey. We are not advised of the result of this announcement.

Although it is not known if this reward resulted in the manufacture of any suitable ceramics, table vessels advertised as "queensware" were manufactured in Philadelphia before 1810 by Alexander Trotter, "a person. . .bred in England to the pottery business," at the Columbian Pottery (Myers 1980:6). In 1807, his wares were exhibited at Peale's Museum; the next year, at the "great Republican dinner of July 4," a jug and goblets from the pottery were a conspicuous part of the tablewares (Barber 1976:111). Over the next several years, various officials praised the "yellow" teapots, coffee pots, and sugar boxes of this manufactory, but no mention is made of plates until 1813, when an advertisement lists dinner plates among the "American Manufactured Queensware" of the Columbian Pottery (Myers 1980:7). The pottery closed in 1814. By 1815, Trotter was making his queensware in Pittsburgh, before possibly moving to Baltimore in 1819 (Myers 1980:88).

Another Englishman, James Charleton, was employed by John Mulloony at the pottery he established in 1810 (Myers 1980:8). Mulloony's Washington Pottery was in operation between 1810 and 1815. During this time, he introduced the first large-scale use of press-molding in American ceramic production. Press-molding speeds up and standardizes production and can be used to create a variety of decorations on vessels. By October 1812, he was advertising that

The public are informed that Soup and Shallow plates are now ready for delivery. . .The Plates manufactured at the Washington Pottery, will be found by experience superior to imported plates, when necessary to stew on a chafing dish or embers, as they will stand the heat without cracking [Myers 1980:79].

In 1815, the pottery was bought by David Seixas, who is thereafter listed in the directories as a "queensware manufacturer" (Myers 1980:8). Under Seixas, and possibly already under Mulloony, the pottery used industrial, modern methods to produce standardized wares (Myers 1980:9).

The Columbian and Washington potteries were established by entrepreneurs who employed English potters. In contrast, Daniel Freytag was an already established Philadelphia potter who began to make refined earthenware in response to the Embargo (Myers 1980:11). Little is presently known about his wares. The tablewares made by the Columbian and Washington manufactories were distributed outside of Philadelphia. Alexandria, Virginia, newspapers had at least two specific advertisements for earthenwares made at the Columbian Pottery, and when the Washington Pottery

was offered for sale, it was noted that the wares had already been bought by merchants who traded in "Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and New Orleans" (Myers 1980:8).

During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, various industrial potteries were established along the east coast and in Ohio to manufacture the equivalent of English queensware, known by this time as "common-colored" or CC¹ (Barber 1976; Denker and Denker 1985; Gates and Ormerod 1982; Ketchum 1987; Myers 1980). However, the Philadelphia potteries that were established to take advantage of the conditions caused by the Embargo did not prosper after the resumption of trade with England and the subsequent dumping of English manufactured goods into the American market.

An earlier attempt to make queensware in North America was undertaken by John Bartlam near Charleston, South Carolina (South 1997a). His pottery was established in 1765, and by 1771 Bartlam advertised that he was making queensware and china. (The "china," according to South, was possibly white salt-glazed stoneware, or perhaps a poor grade of porcelain made from North Carolina clay.) William Ellis, from Staffordshire, England, worked with Bartlam. Ellis later went on to make queensware and white stoneware with the Moravians in North Carolina.

The "Carolina creamware" made by Bartlam was varied in both form and decoration (South 1997a). Excavations at his kiln sites have recovered wasters of plates and molded hollowwares with designs that mirror contemporary English motifs (cauliflower, melon, and pineapple hollowwares, along with bead and reel, dot diaper/basket, and feather-edge rims on plates). Some of the glazes are colored with metallic oxides that result in tortoiseshell, green, or green and yellow surfaces. Other glazes are uncolored, and these vessels have light to somewhat darker yellow surfaces. At the present time, the extent of the distribution of Bartlam's wares, or the vessels made by the Moravians, is not entirely known. Nevertheless, in the opinion of Stanley South, the excavator of the Bartlam sites, the yellow plates found at the McKean/Cochran and Philadelphia sites were not made by Bartlam; they do not resemble his wares in either their forms or their colors (South, personal communication 1997b).

The creamware-like vessels found in Feature 1 were thus probably the products of a Philadelphia potter or potters. Either the Columbian or the Washington pottery, based on their dates of operation and on their advertised claims, might have been the source of these plates. Philadelphia was the dominant city in the regional market, and coarse earthenwares made by Philadelphia potters, or by local potters who worked in the Philadelphia style, have been found at various sites in Delaware and Maryland. Jefferson's Embargo and the War of 1812 provided the opportunity for American potters to try to take the market for refined earthenwares away from English manufacturers. They did not succeed; but some potters, at least in Philadelphia, were apparently able to use established trade patterns to distribute their new products during the period when English goods were scarce.

¹ Today, these vessels are called "whiteware" by archaeologists.

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