III. ARTIFACTS AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LIFE

A. OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

The most valuable discovery at the Dawson Family Site was a collection of artifacts dating to the middle years of the eighteenth century. Archaeology began as an adjunct to museum collecting, and a century ago many archaeologists conducted excavations only to look for spectacular objects that could be put in glass cases. It is not for that reason, however, that we value the discoveries at the Dawson Site. Objects dug from the ground can tell us about the past, and modern archaeologists excavate sites mainly to learn, not to find museum pieces. The artifacts from the Dawson Site offer information about life on a small farm near Dover 250 years ago. All of these artifacts, along with the field records and other materials from the site, will be kept at the Delaware State Museum.

We can learn about people through archaeological artifacts because of our extraordinary, many-sided relationship with the things we make and use. Chimpanzees use twigs to draw termites out of their mounds, and some birds use rocks to break eggs, but our involvement with objects we have made or modified goes far beyond such simple manipulations. As a species, we are in love with things. We have a million different kinds of tools that we use for getting food, building shelter, delivering babies, and every other practical purpose. We also have enormous numbers of things with no immediate practical purpose, things we call art, or magic, or status symbols, or, in the late twentieth century, "collectibles." The two categories merge more often than not, and many things with clear practical functions, such as clothes and houses, also serve to fill our lives with beauty and meaning. Material possessions can reveal much about their owners, from the kind of work they do to their ideas about beauty, politics, and the structure of the universe. Even an object as simple as a ceramic bowl can tell us something about the people who used it. Its size, for example, may relate to a particular custom of dining: whereas we would use a small bowl, one for each diner, in other cultures diners eat from a large, communal bowl. A bowl with a handle is made to be held in the hand during use, whereas one without a handle is meant to remain on the table. Scratch marks on the bottom of a bowl show that its contents were stirred with a metal spoon. A bowl's decoration may convey further meanings; for example, many European bowls of Thomas Dawson's time were painted with imitations of Chinese designs, which gives us an idea of what people thought of as beautiful, and also reminds us that in the Dawsons' day Europeans admired China and the products of its civilization. A bowl found in Delaware, made in England and painted with Chinese designs, also anticipates the worldwide cultural convergence that has produced the global civilization of the twentieth century. It is because people invested so much in their material possessions, and chose many of them with such care, that archaeologists can use artifacts to learn about people who lived in earlier times.

During the excavations at the Dawson Family Site, about 14,600 artifacts were unearthed (Table 5). For general purposes we can divide the collection into three parts: the artifacts from the plowzone, those from the cellar (Feature 1), and those from the pit features. About 7,300 artifacts came from the plowzone, where objects dating to the colonial period were mixed with asphalt fragments, pop tops, and other twentieth-century trash. Because the material from the Phase II testing of the site came primarily from the plowzone, it only hinted at the wealth of information we would find in the cellar and in the other features. During the final excavations, we tried to dispose of most modern objects in the field, except for wire nails (post-1850), which we retained as a sort of index of twentieth-century disturbance. However, with some kinds of objects, especially glass and brick, it is not easy to distinguish the modern specimens from eighteenth-century ones, so some of the material we saved was probably recent. As Table 5 shows, there was much more bottle glass in the plowzone than in the features, and much of that glass was probably modern. Parts of the plowzone had also

Table 5. Historic Artifacts from the Dawson Family Site

Artifact Group/Class	Cellar	Pits	Plowzone	Total	Percent
KITCHEN					
Ceramics	2416	1246	3171	6833	46.7
Bottles & Other Glass	215	535	1784	2534	17.3
Tumblers/Wine Glasses	16	6	5	27	0.2
Kitchenware	5	.	1	6	*
Tableware	17	6	3	26	0.2
Kitchen Subtotal	2669	1792	4964	9426	64.3
ARCHITECTURAL					
Window Glass	18	22	747	787	5.4
Nails, Spikes, etc.	1219	649	1353	3221	22.0
Door Parts	6	2	1	9	0.1
Architectural Subtotal	1243	673	2101	4017	27.4
ARMS					
Lead Shot	1	.	2	3	*
Gunflints	7	1	.	8	0.1
Arms Subtotal	8	1	2	11	0.1
CLOTHING					
Buttons & other fasteners	45	16	26	87	0.6
Buckles	16	2	9	27	0.2
Clothing Subtotal	61	17	35	114	0.8
TOBACCO PIPES					
White Clay Pipes	378	124	86	588	4.0
PERSONAL					
Coins	7	2	2	11	0.1
Hygiene	2	22	1	25	0.2
Personal-Other	2	1	5	8	0.1
Personal Subtotal	11	25	8	44	0.3
ACTIVITIES					
Sewing Related	37	2	.	39	0.3
Horseshoes and Horse Tack	22	2	16	40	0.3
Toys and Music	2	.	2	4	*
Tools	11	1	1	13	0.1
Other Activities	109	173	72	354	2.4
Activities Subtotal	181	178	91	450	3.1
TOTAL[†]	4551	2810	7287	14650	100.0

*Less than 0.1 percent. [†]Not including 765 unidentified, 750 faunal/floral, and 4,079 miscellaneous building material (brick, mortar, etc).

been pushed around by earth-moving machines. Because the plowzone collection was contaminated and disturbed, much of the discussion that follows focuses on the artifacts found in the features.

The majority of the artifacts in the plowzone—at least the majority of those we brought back to the laboratory—dated to the eighteenth century. The datable artifacts included fair amounts of white salt-glazed stoneware (1720 to 1805) and creamware (1762 to 1820), but not much pearlware (1775 to 1850) or whiteware (post-1815). The artifacts suggest a span of occupation for the site of about 1740 to 1780. Because Thomas Dawson died in 1754, and his son, Richard, sold the farm in 1756, it can be assumed that the site was occupied by someone else after the Dawsons left it. These later occupants were presumably tenants of Thomas Nixon. Creamware, introduced in 1762 and quite common by 1770, could serve as a useful indicator for dividing the Dawsons' use of the site from that of the later, tenant occupation.

More than 4,500 artifacts came from the cellar. The cellar, designated Feature 1, measured 11.8 by 13.6 feet and was about 4 feet deep. Because part of the cellar had been destroyed during the construction of U.S. 13, only about two-thirds of it was actually excavated. Most of the artifacts came from Strata C and D, two layers full of ash, oyster shell, and animal bones, which shows that this material began as kitchen trash.

Stratum A, the top layer of the cellar, yielded seven pieces of creamware, which would date to after the Dawsons had abandoned the site. However, this top layer was really only plowzone soil that had washed into the cellar hole, or was pushed there by the plow, many years after the cellar had been abandoned, and it also included a sherd of ironstone dating to after 1900 and two wire nails. The trash layers deeper in the cellar did not contain any creamware, or any other artifacts dating to after 1760. The *terminus post quem*—that is, the date of the most recent securely dated artifact in the trash layers—is 1744, and most of the artifacts seem to date to the 1745-1755 period. It appears that the cellar was filled with trash before the site as a whole was abandoned. Since it is hard to imagine anyone filling in a cellar with trash while the house above it was still occupied, it can be assumed that the tenants built a new house somewhere else on the property. A house built like the Dawsons', held up by wooden sills resting directly on the ground, would not have lasted more than a couple of decades anyway. Since no evidence of the new house was found, it seems likely that it was situated somewhere to the west, under present-day U.S. 13.

The time of abandonment of the first house and the filling in of the cellar may correspond to the end of the Dawson occupation. Since most of the material in the cellar appears to date to the 1740s and 1750s, which matches perfectly with the Dawsons' tenure, it may all derive from their household. Such neat fits between archaeological data and the documentary history of a site are actually not common. Most historical archaeologists have fooled themselves at least once by assuming that building abandonments or site rearrangements should correspond to documented changes in ownership, so we are suspicious of this kind of neat connection. More often, the archaeologically documented occupation of a site mysteriously continues after the written records stop (as with the Dawson Site as a whole), or seems to begin before there is any written record of the site's existence (as at the McKean/Cochran Farm [Bedell et al. 1998a]), and buildings are sometimes rebuilt or torn down without any indication of the event showing up in the written records. But the fit between the artifacts in the cellar and the Dawson occupation is a very good one, and the probability is quite high that in this case the cellar was used only by the Dawsons, and that its contents do derive from the Dawson household.

How did the artifacts found in the cellar get there? The question of how objects end up where we find them is one of the most difficult in archaeology, and often we simply have to admit that we have no answer. As a further complication at this site, the material in the Dawson cellar was not taken directly from the kitchen and dumped into the hole. Instead, it was put in at least one other place

between its point of origin and its eventual resting place in the cellar. Such material is said to have been *redeposited.* The material in the pits at the Dawson Site was also redeposited. Although we have no very clear idea of how eighteenth-century people dealt with their trash or why they moved it around, we know that they often did move it. Most of the artifact-bearing deposits found at the dozen or so eighteenth-century sites studied in Delaware were redeposited materials. We can usually tell the difference between material that has been redeposited and deposits that have not been moved by estimating how complete the various broken objects in the deposit are. When a plate or a cup is dropped and broken, it is usually swept up and the pieces are then tossed out together. Trash that has not been repeatedly moved ought, therefore, to contain many objects that are nearly complete. In the Dawson cellar, most of the plates and cups were less than 10 percent complete, a sure sign that they traveled a complicated route to the place where we dug them out of the ground.

Besides the artifacts found in the cellar, about 2,800 artifacts were found in the other pits on the site. More than half of them came from the three largest pits, Features 7, 9, and 10. While we were in the field, we thought we had observed that some of the pits contained creamware and some did not, and we therefore believed we would be able to assign some of them to the Dawson occupation and some to the later, tenant occupation. As it turned out, however, no such neat distinctions could be made. The pits were all rather shallow, and the upper layers of most of them had been disturbed, probably by earth-moving machinery. As a result, a few modern artifacts were found in most of the pits, including two wire nails in Feature 10 and a fragment of a machine-made glass bottle (post-1889) in Feature 9. Also, there were a number of crossmends between these features and the cellar—that is, pieces of the same pot were found in both places. Feature 10 contained several pieces of creamware, enough to make us think it dated to the later period, but sherds of two different vessels, a delftware bowl and a redware chamber pot, were found in both Feature 10 and the lower levels of the cellar. At least some of the artifacts in the feature therefore derive from the earlier occupation, and we cannot simply say that this pit represents the people who lived on the site after 1760. Only Feature 7, which contained no creamware or other post-1760 material, could be securely dated; it was obviously filled during the Dawson occupation. The material in the other pits may derive from either occupation or from both.

B. CERAMICS

1. Potsherds

The most common artifacts at the Dawson Site were potsherds. Ceramics, or pottery, are extraordinarily useful to archaeologists for two reasons. First, they survive for thousands of years under all kinds of soil conditions, and second, they can be made in an unlimited variety of shapes and styles. Their variety makes them good indicators of cultural differences, and their durability means they can be used to compare all kinds of sites without having to worry about differences in preservation. The potsherds from the Dawson Site are listed in Table 6.

As Table 6 shows, the Dawsons' pottery was mostly coarse red earthenware. Coarse red earthenware was used for utilitarian items such as milk pans, large bowls, and storage jars, but it was also used for some tablewares. In the Delaware Valley a strong tradition of making coarse redwares had developed by Thomas Dawson's time (a tradition that continues today) and most of his redware vessels were probably made locally. Delaware Valley redware potters were the equal of their European counterparts, both technically and stylistically (Bower 1975; Cosans 1981; Dent et al. 1997). In fact, they experimented with new forms not known in Britain, such as imitations of Chinese porcelain bowls. Among their products were vessels decorated with a "slip," a thin, watery clay that was used to draw wavy lines running across or around the vessel (Plate 15). In Dawson's time most of these potters worked in the vicinity of Philadelphia, but others were active throughout the region, including Delaware (De Cunzo et al. 1992:55). By 1760 the decorated

Table 6. Historic Ceramics from the Dawson Family Site

Ceramic Type/Subtype	Cellar	Pits	Plowzone	Total	Percent
COARSE EARTHENWARE					
Redware (Not Dated)	1546	700	2322	4568	66.6
Red-Bodied Slipware (1670-1850)	187	91	244	522	7.6
Buff-Bodied Slipware (1670-1795)	28	23	47	98	1.4
Coarse Earthenware Subtotal	1761	814	2613	5188	75.6
WHITE SALT-GLAZED STONEWARE					
Scratch Blue (1744-1775)	122	88	53	263	3.8
General (1720-1805)	244	188	127	559	8.2
W. Salt-Glazed Stoneware Subtotal	366	276	180	822	12.0
DELFTWARE					
White Glaze (1640-1800)	34	24	33	91	1.3
Blue Painted (1640-1800)	43	5	6	54	0.8
Polychrome Painted (1675-1800)	24	7	4	35	0.5
Blue Glaze (1680-1800)	33	31	2	66	1.0
Delftware Subtotal	134	67	45	246	3.6
REFINED REDWARE (NOT DATED)	3	3	23	29	0.4
ORIENTAL PORCELAIN (NOT DATED)	93	22	20	135	2.0
REFINED AGATE WARE (1740-1775)	7	2	2	11	0.2
ELERS STONEWARE (1690-1775)	1	1	6	8	0.1
WESTERWALD STONEWARE (1620-1775)	5	1	3	9	0.1
GRAY STONEWARE (NOT DATED)	7	.	15	27	0.4
OTHER REFINED EARTHENWARES	1	2	16	19	0.3
CREAMWARE					
Plain (1762-1820)	10	61	215	286	4.2
Green Glaze (1740-1770)	.	.	1	1	0.0
Clouded Glaze (1740-1770)	4	3	5	13	0.2
Embossed (1762-1800)	.	10	11	20	0.3
Creamware Subtotal	14	74	232	320	4.7
PEARLWARE (1775-1840)	.	1	3	4	0.1
WHITEWARE (AFTER 1815)	.	.	14	14	0.2
IRONSTONE (AFTER 1815)	1	2	11	14	0.2
HARD-PASTE PORCELAIN (AFTER 1850)	.	.	12	12	0.2
TOTAL	2393	1181	3195	6858	100.0

coarse earthenware vessels made by these potters had come to seem very old-fashioned in the Chesapeake region, and in parts of England, but in the Delaware Valley they remained common.

The decorated pottery at the Dawson Site was mostly white salt-glazed stoneware, creamware, and the tin-glazed earthenwares known as delftware or faience. Delftware was an older, more

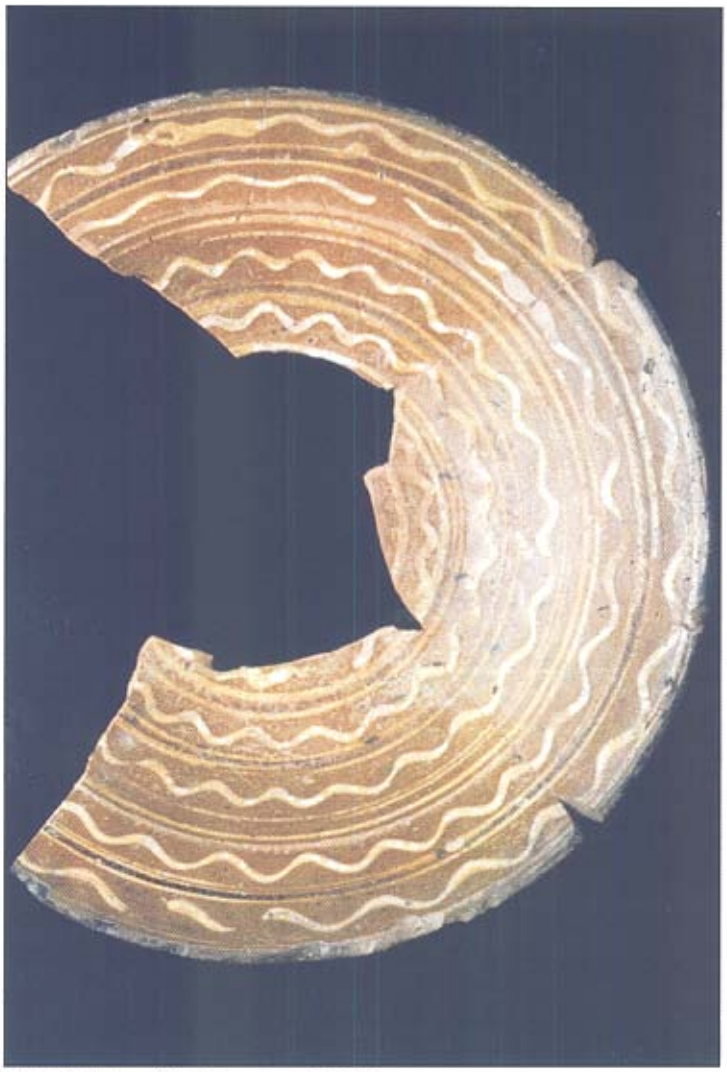

PLATE 15: Slip-Decorated Dish

traditional product, quite lovely but not really rugged enough to stand up to heavy use at the table. White salt-glazed stoneware, introduced around 1720, was more durable and was used to make all sorts of table and tea dishes, including plates, bowls, and cups. Much of the Dawsons' stoneware was the decorated form known as "scratch blue," especially their teawares. The Dawsons also had a fair amount of Oriental porcelain, again mostly in the form of tea dishes.

2. Counting the Dawsons' Dishes, Jars, and Pans

While counts of potsherds are useful, archaeologists prefer to analyze ceramics by calculating a number we call the Minimum Number of Vessels. The Minimum Number of Vessels is the smallest number of pots, cups, plates, and other vessels that could have produced the sherds we dig out of the ground. Essentially, the process involves sorting the ceramic sherds into smaller and smaller groups, based on differences in type, curvature, thickness, size, glaze color, and decoration, until all those in each group could have come from a single vessel. We also try to mend the vessels, that is, actually glue the pieces back together, since refitting provides the most secure evidence that the sherds came from the same vessel, and it also gives us a better idea of what the vessels actually looked like. Sometimes refitting helps identify a vessel, as, for example, when a piece of a porcelain foot that could have come from a teacup or a saucer mends to a teacup rim. At the Dawson Site we performed this analysis only on the ceramics from Feature 1, the cellar, and from Features 7 and 10, the two largest pits. These three features contained a total of 2,966 potsherds, and from them we identified 405 ceramic vessels. As we explained above, the artifacts in all of these features had been redeposited, and the ceramic vessels were highly fragmentary. More than 90 percent of the vessels we identified were less than 10 percent complete—that is, we found less than 10 percent of the vessel—and only two vessels were more than 75 percent complete. When the vessels are highly fragmentary, the minimum vessel count is not a precise reflection of the cups and pans that were actually used on the site. For example, when you are working from a few small sherds it is much easier to separate different decorated vessels, which can be distinguished by their designs, than it is to separate coarse earthenware pans with brown glazes. Therefore, the vessel count from the Dawson Site, given in Table 7, probably underestimates the number of coarse earthenware vessels. However, this problem is encountered to some extent at all sites, so it is still

worth computing these numbers and using them to compare the ceramics from different sites.

Table 7. Ceramic Vessels from the Dawson Family Site, by Functional Group

	Feature 1	Feature 7	Feature 10	Total	Percent
Teawares	58	7	5	70	17.3
Tablewares	33	4	2	39	9.6
Non-Tea Drinking Vessels	14	2	1	17	4.2
Food Preparation	16	1	.	17	4.2
Food Storage	11	4	.	15	3.7
Multifunction	24	.	1	25	6.2
Sanitary	1	.	1	2	0.5
Unidentified	146	6	68	220	54.3
TOTAL	303	24	78	405	

Table 8 shows the vessels in a different way, divided by function. Because the vessels from the site were so fragmentary, more than half of them could not be identified. As most of the unidentified vessels were coarse earthenwares, they probably belong in the food storage, the food preparation, or the "multifunction" category. (Vessels placed in the multifunction category are those that may have been used both in the kitchen and at the table.) The Dawson Site yielded vessels in all the major categories we use in studying eighteenth-century sites. Teawares, used in preparing and serving tea, were the most common identifiable vessels. We also found substantial numbers of tablewares, that is, dishes used at the dining table, and multifunction vessels. Table 9 lists all the identifiable teaware and tableware vessels from the Dawson Site. The table describes both the type of vessel and the material from which it was made.

It was common in the eighteenth century for teawares to be a family's best and most expensive dishes. The tea ceremony was rather new and still highly fashionable, and since it was one of the main ways people entertained one another, it provided a great opportunity for showing off one's wealth and taste. The Dawsons' teawares fit this pattern well. Their tea dishes include white salt-glazed scratch-blue decorated cups, saucers, teapots, and jugs and a few porcelain and tin-glazed cups. Some of their scratch-blue teacups and saucers have very similar patterns and would have made a good set. In addition, there is a sprigged and clouded early cream-colored teapot and an elaborately decorated molded white salt-glazed teapot made by Thomas and John Wedgwood, of the Big House, Burslem, before 1745 (Mountford 1971:plate 98). The mold used for this vessel was made in several pieces and the motif consists of "grotesque figures, birds, and animals in relief" (Mountford 1971:plate 98). Another unusual vessel is represented by eight sherds of reddish stoneware. This is probably a pear-shaped creamer and is most likely a piece

Table 8. Ceramic Vessels from the Dawson Family Site, by Ware Type

	Feature 1	Feature 7	Feature 10	Total	Percent
Coarse Earthenwares	100	11	69	180	44.4
Refined Earthenwares	28	1	4	33	8.1
Refined Stonewares	155	11	5	171	42.2
Coarse Stonewares	3	.	.	3	0.7
Porcelains	17	1	.	18	4.4
TOTAL	303	24	78	405	

Table 9. Dawson Family Site, Minimum Number of Ceramic Vessels, Teawares and Tablewares

	TEAWARES				TABLEWARES				NON-TEA DRINKING		
WARE TYPE	Cup	Saucer	Teapot	Misc. Tea	Plate	Bowl	Porringer	Misc. Table	Mug	Misc.	TOTAL
Porcelain	7	7	.	1	.	2	.	.	.	.	17
Faience (delftware)	4	.	.	.	2	6	.	6	.	.	18
White salt-glazed stoneware, plain	8	5	3	3	.	3	.	1	6	.	29
White salt-glazed stoneware, molded	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	2
White salt-glazed stoneware, scratch-blue	13	11	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	27
Elers stoneware	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Westerwald stoneware	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	2
Red-bodied earthenware	.	1	2	.	.	3	9	1	7	1	24
Slip-decorated	.	.	.	.	.	5	.	.	.	.	5
Dot & combed slipware	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1
TOTAL	32	24	9	5	3	19	9	8	14	3	126

made by the Elers brothers, who decorated their vessels with dies. True Elers pieces were never common and were among the finest English ceramics available to the colonists. The sherd illustrated in Plate 16 may depict an Indian potentate. This sherd is therefore another sign, along with the presence of Chinese porcelain, of the fascination with the ancient cultures of Asia that was widespread in eighteenth-century Europe. The other vessels from the site classified as "miscellaneous teawares" consist only of foot rings that probably came from creamers or small teapots.

Tablewares were not as common as teawares, because pewter plates were the vessels most often used for eating at this time in Delaware, and Thomas Dawson's inventory lists six of them. However, there were at least one tin-glazed and two salt-glazed plates (Plate 17). The tin-glazed or delft plate is particularly striking, and would have made a nice display on the dinner table. The 10 pieces of this plate came from 10 different contexts, including Strata A through D of the cellar and Feature 10, so it well illustrates the degree of mixing of the deposits on the site. The most common table vessels from the site are small bowls and porringers. The bowls include an interesting variety of decorated delftware pieces, among which are white-glazed vessels with blue, purple, and polychrome (multicolored) decoration and blue-glazed vessels with blue and polychrome decoration. Set side by side they suggest a gaudy table indeed. Two porcelain bowls were also found, and five small slip-decorated bowls. Small slip-decorated bowls, which are a distinctive part of the Philadelphia/Lower Delaware Valley redware tradition, have been found on almost all of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century sites that have been excavated in Delaware. The bowls and porringers are very interesting because they suggest both what and how the Dawsons ate. Bowls could be used for soup or "chowder" and stew, which were mainstays of the diet, and also for porridges, puddings, and other soft, boiled bread products. The Dawsons obviously owned a good many small bowls, as did most other farmers in Delaware whose farms have been excavated.

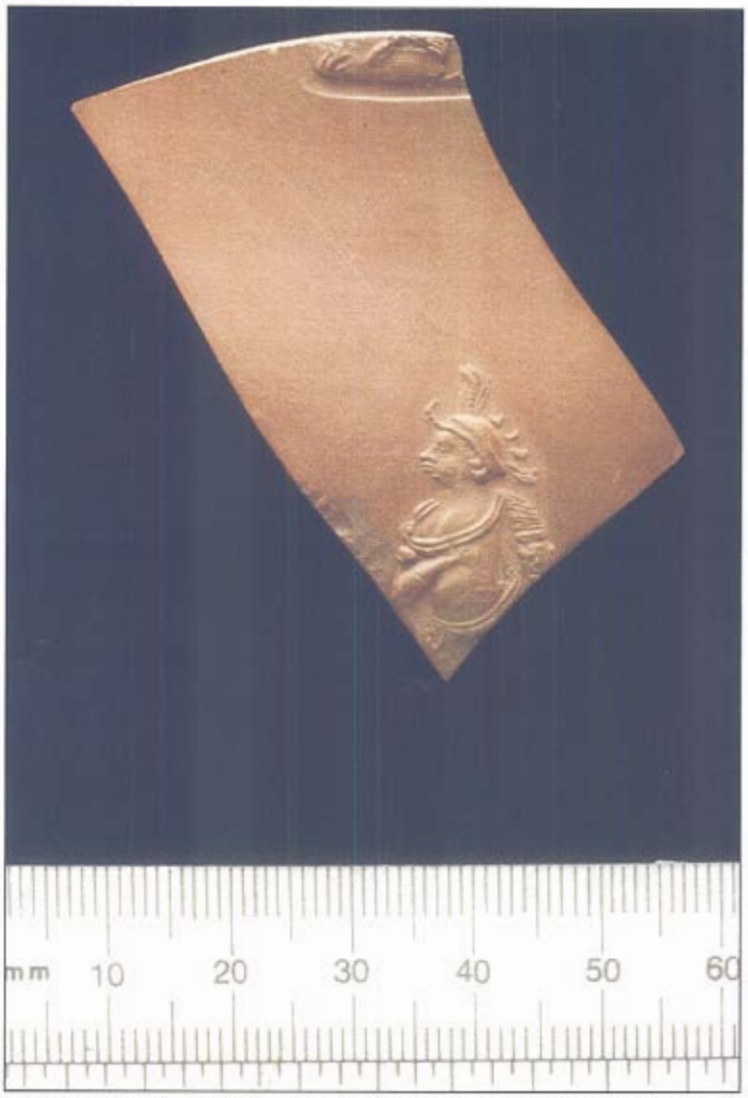

PLATE 16: Sherd from an Elers Brothers Stoneware Creamer

Porridge and similar foods probably formed an important part of their diet.

Mugs were common. Most of the mugs found were made of coarse red earthenwares with dark brown or black lead glazes, but there are also white salt-glazed examples and one or two Rhenish jugs. The redware mugs have heavy interior wear, as if their contents were stirred often and vigorously. The "miscellaneous drinking vessels" are base fragments that could have come either from large mugs or small jugs; eighteenth-century potters commonly made these two items together, with the same clay and the same glazes, selling them as "mugs and jugs ware," so it can be difficult to tell them apart. Although none are listed in Table 9, it seems likely that the Dawsons had at least two punch bowls. To people of the eighteenth century, rum punch was for entertaining; a husband and wife would have been unlikely to make up a bowl of punch just for themselves. One of the porcelain bowls was quite large, with a very large, tall foot ring, and this vessel was probably a punch bowl. A large punch bowl made of Chinese porcelain would have been an elegant and rather expensive item, well-suited for entertaining neighbors. One delft bowl that was probably a punch bowl was also found, as were three bowls of unknown size, any of which could also have been punch bowls.

Overall, it seems that for ordinary farmers the Dawsons had an extensive investment in items for entertaining. They had quite elegant teawares, including the molded white teapot and the red Elers creamer, a vessel as fine as anything on the tables of the richest colonists. Archaeological evidence shows that they almost certainly had punch bowls, and this is confirmed by Thomas Dawson's probate inventory, which lists three. The inventory also shows that Dawson had 20 gallons of rum, enough for some fairly serious celebrating. The many decorated delftware bowls from the Dawson Site also suggest a love of display compatible with setting an elegant table. Whether serving tea, sitting down to dinner, or mixing up rum punch, the Dawsons seem to have had an active social life, and we can imagine them whiling away their winter evenings with neighbors and friends. By a strange coincidence we even know the identity of one of the Dawsons' social callers. When Catherine McClure died in May 1744, those who took her inventory noted that among her possessions were a black silk bonnet and gloves "at Thomas Dawson's," apparently left there during a visit. Since Catherine McClure also

owned a black silk gown, she may have been a person of some wealth.

It is also possible that the Dawsons were operating a small tavern in their home. While Thomas Dawson does not appear in any of the surviving lists of licensed tavern operators in Kent County (Edward Heite, personal communication 1999), unlicenced taverns were rather common. In terms of their investment in refined dishes and other items related to entertainment, the Dawsons fall in between most of the farm sites and the Ogletown Tavern (Coleman et al. 1990). The differences between the Dawson assemblage and those from other farm sites certainly could be explained by a venture into the tavern-keeping business. However, there is no firm evidence that the Dawsons ever took this step.

The Dawsons' food preparation and storage vessels were the familiar forms found on all sites in the Delaware Valley (Table 10). The 17 milk pans remind us of how important dairying was in the traditional economy of northern Europe, a habit carried over to the Middle Atlantic and New England colonies. We found several storage jars, jugs, and bowls, and two chamber pots. The slip-trailed dishes and pans are very common on Delaware sites. The pans—round vessels with flat bottoms and sloping sides—had many uses, but among them was making porridges and puddings. They are therefore part of the same food tradition as the small bowls discussed above, and their prominence in Delaware shows how important these foods were in the eighteenth-century diet. Most of the vessels of this type found in the Delaware Valley were locally made, but the Dawsons also had four British-made slipware dishes. These dishes, along with the variety of delftware, suggest that the Dawsons were more directly tied to trans-Atlantic trade than most Delaware Valley farmers, using imported goods where others would have used local products. Perhaps some of Thomas Dawsons' well-to-do relatives were involved in commerce and he took advantage of these connections.

To put the ceramics from the Dawson Family Site in context, it is helpful to compare them directly with those from other eighteenth-century sites in

PLATE 17: Delftware and White Salt-Glazed Stoneware Plates

Table 10. Dawson Family Site, Minimum Number of Ceramic Vessels, Other Functions

	STORAGE & PREPARATION			MULTIFUNCTION				SANITARY	
WARE TYPE	Jar	Jug	Milk Pan	Dish	Pan	Bowl	Misc. Multif.	Chamber Pot	TOTAL
Westerwald stoneware	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1
Red-bodied, glazed earthenware	9	6	17	.	.	2	3	1	38
Slip decorated	.	.	.	7	9	.	.	.	16
Dot & comb	.	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	4
TOTAL	9	6	17	11	9	2	3	2	59

the region. Table 11 compares the ceramic vessels (not sherds) from 16 sites within the Lower Delaware Valley in Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, listed in approximate chronological order. The sites include 12 rural dwellings, one crossroads tavern, and three urban sites. All but one of the rural sites are in Delaware; the John Tyndall Site is in Mercer County, New Jersey. The rural sites were occupied by people of varying status, from well-to-do farmers at the Charles Robinson Site and those represented by the later deposits at the McKean/Cochran Farm, to poor tenants at the Augustine Creek North Site. Most of these sites could be classed as "ordinary." The tavern site was a mid-eighteenth-century cellar hole on the site of the nineteenth-century John Ruth Inn, in northern New Castle County, Delaware. The Parsonage of Old Swedes Church was in Wilmington, and the New Market Street and 7th and Arch Street sites were in Philadelphia.

As can be seen from Table 11, coarse earthenwares were the most common vessels on all of the eighteenth-century rural sites except the Dawson Site. At some sites dating to after 1775, the percentage of coarse earthenware was less, as low as 30.8 percent in the early nineteenth-century deposits at the McKean/Cochran Farm. However, coarse earthenwares remained very common at some sites up until the Civil War. The main deposits at the Darrach Store dated to roughly 1805-1830, and coarse earthenwares made up 58.6 percent of the vessels there. Coarse earthenwares were less common on the urban sites, in part, no doubt, because town dwellers did not need milk pans or as many storage jars as farmers did. The difference may also reflect the different tastes of town dwellers, who in the eighteenth century tended to invest more heavily in fashionable consumer goods than rural people did (Carr and Walsh 1994; Carson 1994). Tavern sites have long been known to present a distinctive artifact pattern, with more of the artifacts such as tankards, wine glasses, tobacco pipes, and punch bowls that reflect tavern socializing, and fewer farm- and dairy-related items (Coleman et al. 1990; Luckenbach et al. 1998).

The large amount of coarse earthenware found on all of these sites is one of the factors that distinguishes the sites of the Delaware Valley from those of the Chesapeake Bay region. In the Chesapeake Bay, coarse red earthenwares became rather rare by the American Revolution, and sites from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries usually yield very little (Bedell et al. 1998a; Crane et al. 1999). The difference relates in part to a preference among southern potters and consumers for stoneware, but it probably also reflects the development of distinct regional diets in North America. The Southern diet relied more heavily on frying (grits instead of oatmeal), so

Table 11. Ceramics from Selected Delaware Valley Sites, by Ware Type

SITE	DATE	TYPE	COARSE EARTHEN-WARES (%)	COARSE STONE-WARES (%)	REFINED WARES (%)	POR-CELAIN (%)	TOTAL NUMBER OF VESSELS
John Powell[1]	1690-1735	Farm	72.5	.	27.5	.	51
John Tyndall[2]	1720-1740	Farm	69.5	5.7	22.4	2.3	174
Wm. Strickland[3]	1726-1764	Farm	65.5	4.4	25.8	4.4	229
Augustine Creek S.[4]	1724-1760	Farm	54.4	1.2	43.0	1.0	309
Dawson Family	**1740-1780**	**Farm**	**46.8**	**0.8**	**52.7**	**4.7**	**405**
Old Swedes[5]	1757-1768	Town Parsonage	51.2	.	38.4	10.5	86
Augustine Creek N.[4]	1750-1770	Tenant Farm	68.0	2.0	30.0	.	50
McKean/Cochran I[6]	1750-1790	Tenant Farm	52.5	.	37.0	10.5	200
New Market St.[7]	1765-1775	Urban Privy	26.8	0.7	54.9	17.6	403
Charles Robinson[7]	1760-1782	Farm	57.2	2.1	35.8	4.9	528
Ogletown Tavern[8]	1740-1820	Crossroads Tavern	38.7	.	61.3	4.5	375
Benjamin Wynn[9]	1765-1822	Tenant Farm	45.4	0.5	53.7	0.5	218
Whitten Road[10]	1760-1830	Tenant Farm	61.5	1.6	33.3	3.6	384
Darrach Store[11]	1775-1860	Tenant House	58.6	1.6	35.9	4.0	251
McKean/Cochran II[6]	1790-1830	Farm	30.8	1.2	51.8	16.2	517
7th & Arch Streets[12]	1800-1820	Urban Households	23.7	1.1	64.5	10.7	262

Sources: [1]Grettler et al. 1995; [2]Berger 1986; [3]Catts et al. 1995; [4]Bedell et al. 1998b; [5]LeeDecker et al. 1990; [6] Bedell et al. 1998a; [7] Thomas et al. 1994; [8]Coleman et al. 1990; [9] Grettler et al. 1996; [10]Shaffer et al. 1988; [11] De Cunzo et al. 1992; [12]Dent et al. 1997

Southern cooks had less need for earthenware pans and other large vessels (Glassie 1968:115).

Very little coarse stoneware was found on any of these sites, which clearly shows the dominance of coarse earthenwares in the Delaware Valley ceramic tradition. The only clear difference Table 11 shows between rich and poor households is in the amount of oriental porcelain found. Very little was found at the rather poor John Powell, Augustine Creek North, and Benjamin Wynn sites. The greatest amounts of porcelain were found in the later assemblages from the McKean/Cochran Farm (16.2 percent) and in the three urban sites, one of which, the New Market Street Privy (17.6 percent), was also associated with a wealthy household. However, the equation is not perfect. More porcelain vessels were found at the Whitten Road and Darrach Store sites, both occupied by relatively poor tenants, than at the Augustine Creek South Site, home of an ordinary farm family with a fair investment in other luxury goods (Bedell et al. 1998b). There may also be a difference in the amount of coarse versus refined wares on the sites, with the higher-status sites showing some tendency to contain more refined wares, but this relationship is not strong.

It is somewhat difficult to compare the types and functions of vessels among different sites, because ceramic analysts do not all use the same terms for vessels and do not classify them in the same ways. As it turns out, however, one can compare a substantial number of Delaware Valley sites using the outputs of only two laboratories. The ceramics from the John Powell, William Strickland, Ogletown Tavern, Benjamin Wynn, Whitten Road, and Darrach Store sites were all analyzed at the University of Delaware Center for Archaeological Research, while those from the John Tyndall, Augustine Creek South, Augustine Creek North, Old Swedes Parsonage, McKean/Cochran Farm, and 7th & Arch Streets sites were all analyzed by our laboratory at The Louis Berger Group, Inc. There are some differences in the results from these two organizations. For example, Berger analysts identify many more porringers than the University of Delaware does, while University of

Delaware analysts classify as plates many redware and slipware vessels that at Berger would probably be called dishes. Nevertheless, the overall approach is similar enough to make the comparison valid, within certain limits. Table 12 shows the vessels identified in the reports from these sites. The table includes one other site, the Charles Robinson Plantation, where the ceramics were analyzed by Betty Cosans Zeebooker of Philadelphia. Her approach seems to be similar to that taken by the University of Delaware, although a single site is not enough for a detailed comparison. A more serious problem with the vessels from the Charles Robinson Plantation is that we are not sure where they came from. The site is less than a mile from the town of Odessa, and so many vessels were found at the site, including 46 teapots, that one wonders if somebody perhaps hauled a few wagonloads of trash down to the Robinsons' cellar hole. However, the overall pattern does seem to match the other sites in the sample. The report on the ceramics from the New Market Street Privy, included in Table 11, is not sufficiently detailed for the vessels to be considered (Cosans 1981).

Most of the rural sites had very similar kinds of vessels. There was evidence of tea use at all of the sites except the John Powell Plantation, which was abandoned by 1735. After that time, serving tea in appropriate vessels seems to have been nearly universal in the Delaware Valley. The "miscellaneous tea" category includes creamers and sugar bowls, which were part of the most formal tea settings, and these vessels were found on several sites. Tea did not displace older beverages, however; mugs, often used for cider and beer, were also common at these sites. Storage jars or pots were common on most of the rural sites, as were milk pans. Within the multifunction category there seems to be some overlap between forms. At some sites, people apparently used large bowls instead of pans, and vice versa. These large, earthenware vessels, used both in the kitchen and at the table, are distinctive markers of the Delaware Valley cultural tradition, much less common in the Chesapeake region or in New York State (Bedell et al. 1998a).

The urban sites had a greater variety of tea and table vessels than the rural sites, and fewer coarse, utilitarian vessels. The New Market Street Privy, dated to around 1775, is not included in Table 12, but the report on this site (Cosans 1981) indicates that it contained creamers, sugar bowls, coffee pots, coffee cups, sauceboats, a fruit dish, and a dessert dish, equipment for a very fine table. The deposits at 7th & Arch Streets in Philadelphia, a deep shaft feature and a trash barrel (Features 19 and 56) dating to the early 1800s, stand out for the number of toys and flowerpots, more signs of a different consumer emphasis. In terms of their ceramics, and the way their dinner and tea tables looked, there was a real difference between the urban and rural sites in the sample; however, both types clearly fit within the general outlines of the Delaware Valley cultural tradition. Both urban and rural households used a mixture of locally made and imported ceramics, including the distinctive slip-decorated pans and dishes made by the valley's potters.

The Dawson Site does not fit exactly into the pattern defined by the other sites. Although it generally resembles the other rural, mid-eighteenth-century sites, it has some characteristics that are more like the later urban sites. At the Dawson Site, refined vessels, especially white salt-glazed stoneware, outnumber coarse vessels. There are a variety of vessels in the "miscellaneous tea" and "miscellaneous table" categories, indicating a rather sophisticated table setting. The Elers stoneware creamer, a truly elegant vessel, fits this context. Although Table 12 does not show the origins of vessels, the Dawsons also seem to have had more than the average number of imported items, as was noted above. These differences remind us that people of the eighteenth century were individuals. The Dawsons shared a culture with their neighbors and were like them in many ways, but they also had their own ideas about what was pleasing and necessary.

Table 12. Ceramic Vessels from Selected Delaware Valley Sites

		John Powell	John Tyndall	Wm. Strickland	Aug. Creek S.	**Dawson Family**	Aug. Creek N.	McKean/ Cochran I
Tea	cup	.	5	19	30	**34**	2	13
	saucer	.	11	10	37	**24**	1	19
	teapot	.	.	3	8	**9**	1	1
	misc.	.	.	1	5	**5**	.	.
Table	plate	7	10	26	6	**3**	1	2
	bowl	.	3	24	18	**19**	1	12
	porringer	1	22	4	18	**9**	1	10
	pitcher	1	.	.	.	**.**	.	.
	platter	.	.	3	.	**.**	.	2
	misc.	.	.	.	4	**8**	.	8
Non-Tea	mug	15	15	.	30	**14**	8	7
Drinking	cup	5	4	10	3	**.**	.	.
	mug/jug	.	2	41	.	**3**	.	16
	punch bowl	.	.	.	1	**.**	.	.
Storage	jar	8	11	4	20	**9**	1	10
	pot	.	.	13	.	**.**	.	.
Food	milk pan	7	.	23	20	**17**	1	15
Prep-	pipkin	.	.	.	1	**.**	.	1
aration	colander	.	.	.	.	**.**	.	1
Multi-	dish	.	9	8	21	**11**	4	10
function	pan	1	8	.	23	**9**	1	14
	jug	4	.	.	4	**6**	1	5
	bottle	1	1	.	.	**.**	.	.
	large bowl	3	12	15	.	**2**	.	2
Sanitary	chamber pot	.	.	9	3	**2**	.	3
	ointment pot	1	1	4	.	**.**	1	1
	drug jar	.	.	1	.	**.**	.	.
Other	toy	.	.	1	.	**.**	.	.
Unid.	Hollow	.	23	20	52	**223**	.	50
TOTAL		54	174	237	309	**405**	24	202

Table 12. Ceramic Vessels from Selected Delaware Valley Sites (continued)

		Old Swedes	Ogletown Tavern	Benj. Wynn	Whitten Road	Charles Robinson	McKean/ Cochran II	Darrach Store	7th & Arch
Tea	cup	11	30	32	37	58	64	23	32
	saucer	6	11	32	12	52	71	5	39
	teapot	4	2	9	5	46	15	2	8
	creamer	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.
	misc.	.	.	.	.	.	10	8	1
	cup/sm. bowl	.	5	.	18	.	.	.	.
Table	plate	17	59	26	21	36	89	33	46
	dish	.	14	.	1	.	1	.	5
	bowl	8	32	25	23	27	54	19	19
	porringer	1	1	3	.	.	5	.	3
	pitcher	1	5	1	.	6	4	1	6
	platter	.	4	3	.	4	.	.	1
	misc.	.	.	2	2	1	7	2	5
Non-Tea	mug	.	46	6	5	8	18	4	11
Drinking	cup	.	39	.	10	.	.	.	.
	punch bowl	.	3	1	.	.	.	.	.
Storage	jar	.	1	11	32	34	15	1	4
	pot	.	10	.	1	.	.	14	.
Food	milk pan	11	7	6	1	5	30	2	1
Prepar-	colander	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.
ation	cooking pot	1	6	.	.	.	.	2	.
Multi-	dish	15	8	27	73	91	14	18	8
function	pan	2	4	17	.	90	21	12	9
	jug	.	5	6	.	9	7	4	4
	bottle	.	2	.	.	1	.	.	.
	large bowl	3	20	13	13	54	1	22	4
Sanitary	chamber pot	6	12	1	9	6	2	2	14
	basin	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3
	ointment pot	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
Activities	toy	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	10
	flowerpot	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4
Unid.	Hollow	31	22	8	47	.	.	22	.
	Flat	4	23	.	6	.	.	.	.
	Unid.	19	3	.	68	.	.	54	10
TOTAL		140	375	229	384	528	431	251	252

3. *Vessels and Eating Habits*

In the eighteenth century, many ordinary people in Europe and European America adopted a new style of eating that some historians think was part of an extremely important transformation of daily life. Most Americans living in the present day consider it normal and traditional to eat their meals sitting around a table that is placed in the center of a room. We sit in straight-backed chairs that encourage proper posture. We expect that each diner will have his or her own plate, along with a cup or drinking glass and, most likely, a knife, fork, and spoon. Although we regularly use our hands to eat some kinds of food, like hamburgers and corn on the cob, we do not expect to see most foods eaten in that way. In medieval times, the customs were quite different. Tables were common, but they were usually pushed against a wall and people did not normally sit around them. In winter, most people ate sitting around a fire. Even today one can find people in rural areas of Europe who put their food out on tables pushed against a wall but eat it sitting in chairs around a fire, holding their dishes in their hands or balancing them on their laps (Glassie 1982). In medieval times, when people did sit around a table, they often ate directly from a common pot or platter, all dipping their bread into the same dish of stew. Even at formal banquets, medieval lords and ladies often shared a plate with the diner next to them (Elias 1978). Without forks, people had to spear their meat with their knives or pick it up with their fingers.

In the Renaissance, dining habits began to change, first for the aristocracy and the commercial elite. Standards of behavior were tightened, and people were more and more often provided with their own set of utensils. Eating from a common pot came to be seen as boorish, and something resembling formal dining as we know it slowly developed. In the eighteenth century these changes began to spread widely, and we can see the results on archaeological sites. Plates and small bowls and dishes became increasingly common, as did forks and dishes in matching sets. The new style of dining is therefore easy to identify archaeologically and a good way for archaeologists to approach broader questions of cultural change in the eighteenth century. Along with the new standard of civilized dining went the tea ceremony, a ritual of refinement that allowed ordinary people to practice gentle manners. Tea drinking, which in the later 1600s was a habit only of the rich, spread very rapidly after 1700, and by 1750 was very common among ordinary people in Europe and America. Tea was not simply a beverage that people drank; it was "taken" in a formal way that became a badge of social standing. It required a set of special objects—at a minimum, cups, saucers, a teapot, a creamer, and spoons—making it very easy for archaeologists to trace its spread.

Although the Dawsons did have the variety of dishes necessary for both refined dining and the fashionable tea ceremony, another kind of ceramic vessel we found at their farm reminds us that things never change completely overnight. The Dawsons, despite their above-average investment in teawares and tablewares, did not eat all their meals in the new style. Along with the plates and teacups we found nine porringers, and we believe these small vessels are an important indication of social conservatism in the eighteenth century (Plate 18). What is a porringer? From a purely descriptive point of view, porringers are simply small bowls with handles. The handle provides a secure hold on the vessel and implies that the vessel is held in the hand while eating or while feeding another; in recent times porringers have been particularly connected with feeding children. Porringers are best adapted for liquid or mushy foods eaten with spoons. Many archaeologically recovered porringers have heavy stirring and/or scoop marks that are evidence of use with spoons.

Porringers have been part of northern European potters' productions since the Middle Ages. They were generally made of red-or buff-bodied clays, depending on what was locally available, and were glazed with lead or tin. Tin-glazed porringers differed from lead-glazed vessels in their size (tin-glazed vessels were smaller) and in

their handle shapes, which were direct imitations of the handles on silver vessels. The implication, of course, is that the tin-glazed vessels were more "high-class" than the "vernacular" red-and buff-bodied lead-glazed vessels.

Both tin- and lead-glazed porringers were used for eating a variety of cereal or broth-based foods. Porridges, made not just out of oats but from any kind of grain available, were an important part of the everyday diet of most northern Europeans. Grains were either ground into meal and boiled, or roasted, crushed, and boiled. The standard diet of students at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands during the mid-seventeenth century, for example, included a midday meal (the largest of the day) that always started with a grain porridge or with bread soaked in fat or beer, and an evening meal that began with some combination of milk and boiled grains or soup (Janowitz 1993). The students were from the middle and upper socioeconomic classes and would most probably not have been served food that was inappropriate to their status. At any rate, porridges were not low-status foods in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, nor were they confined to breakfast. (The Groningen students had bread, butter, cheese, and beer for breakfast.)

When we became interested in the porringers from the Dawson Site, we thought it would be relatively easy to compare sites from different time periods to see where and when porringers occur. We did not see many porringers, however, when we looked into other site reports. Many archaeologists apparently do not easily identify red earthenware vessels as porringers, and most of these vessels are probably lost within a general "Bowl" category (see Table 12). (Delftware porringers are also under-identified, but are recognized easily by their distinctive handles when these are recovered.) The list of ceramic vessels from the Charles Robinson Plantation in New Castle County (1762-1781) contains no porringers, although there is a photograph of one in the report on that site (Thomas et al. 1994:III-60). This discrepancy is probably due partly to an understandable hesitation to make vessel identifications on the basis of a small number of sherds. However, many fragmentary porringers are distinctive: the rim curvature on these vessels is usually more pronounced than on mugs, cups, or drinking pots;

PLATE 18: Porringer

the handles are more curved than on mugs and larger than on cups, and the attachment of the handle at the widest part of the body is characteristic; the bodies are more sharply curved than those of mugs or drinking pots; and the vessel as a whole is larger than a cup. Many porringers made in the Lower Delaware Valley redware tradition have reeding around or above the waist. Porringers are identified in some reports—possibly because the handle was still attached to the recovered piece (see Table 12). The identification is not consistent, however, and the numbers of porringers recorded for various sites are therefore probably not reliable.

Porringers are mentioned in Delaware probate inventories (see below). The inventory of John Amit, a shoemaker who died in 1744, gives a very detailed list of his vessels and kitchen utensils, which included four porringers, as well as six dishes, six plates, one basin, 22 spoons, eight trenchers, two bowls, four earthen pans, five plates, and one chamber pot. Inventories also tell us that some Delawareans had pewter porringers. Robert Reiney's inventory, made in 1752, included "18 pewter plates & 3 dishes & 5 porringers & 14 spoons & 1 funnel."

From other documentary sources, we know that porringers were a regular part of the production of redware potters until the mid-nineteenth century (Ketchum 1983:158-159). The daybooks of Mauldin Perrine, a Baltimore potter, were used by Susan Myers to trace the types of wares that he made and the customers to whom he sold his goods (Myers 1984). Perrine was not a traditional "conservative potter" but was, according to Myers, "in tune with his more enterprising counterparts" in the transition from handicraft to small industry (Myers 1984:51). His products in 1840 were traditional forms made in traditional ways, but his marketing techniques were nontraditional, since the bulk of his wares were sold wholesale. His customers included china and glass merchants as well as grocers, but it was only the latter who bought and sold his porringers. Presumably, the customers of these small-scale grocers were predominantly those of lower socioeconomic status.

Myers describes the vessels as "simple redware porringers, traditionally viewed as the humblest of eating vessels" (Myers 1984:59). Writing mainly of the nineteenth century, she says that porringers were associated with eating gruel, and that eating gruel was associated with poverty. Porringers even appeared as symbols of destitution in nineteenth-century paintings of beggars and poor families.

How and when did porringers decline from their position as a common item of every kitchen to become a symbol of poverty? Although comparative site material is scarce, we can make some general observations about the presence of porringers on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sites. From about 1760 onward, the number of porringers decreases. At the McKean/Cochran Farm Site, near Odessa, deposits dating to two periods were found. The earlier material, much of which dated to the 1750s and 1760s, included 10 porringers among 152 identified vessels. The later material, dating to 1790 to 1820, included only five porringers among 431 vessels (see Table 12). There are two reasons for the declining number of porringers on archaeological sites. First, the way people ate changed, and grain gruels and bread soaked in various liquids came to be eaten almost exclusively at breakfast, or by children or invalids, at least among the upper and middle classes in British North America. Second, the vessels used to serve these foods changed—from redware porringers and bowls to creamware, pearlware, and even porcelain bowls, all made without handles. Although a porcelain bowl could be used for eating the same foods as were eaten from a porringer, it could not be used in the same way. Bowls without handles, especially if they were made of a thin, heat-conducting material such as porcelain or pearlware, could not be held in the hands, and had to be used at a table.

Benjamin Franklin's observations about porringers, quoted many times by ceramics historians, bear repeating here:

> Our table was plain and simple, our furniture of the cheapest. For instance, my

> breakfast was bread and milk and I ate it out of a twopenny earthen porringer with a pewter spoon. But mark how luxury will enter families and make a progress, in spite of principle. Being called one morning to breakfast, I found it in a china bowl, with a spoon of silver . . . my wife had not other excuse or apology to make but that she thought *her* husband deserved a silver spoon and china bowl as well as any of his neighbors [Franklin, quoted in Myers 1984:59].

The decline of the porringer, therefore, was part of the same process that led to the rise in the use of the plate and teacup, a general refinement of dining habits. Porringers hark back to an earlier tradition of food consumption, in which people did not always sit at table together. Thomas and Mary Dawson's ceramics exhibit a mixture of old and new traditions. On the one hand, the household was keeping to traditional foodways, but on the other hand, it was adopting new, genteel ways of presenting food. That the Dawsons accepted elements of the new style of dining we know from their plates and teacups. Their reluctance to abandon all of their old eating habits is symbolized by their heavily used porringers. We do not know how they mixed the two styles, but perhaps they sat at table for one major meal a day—probably dinner, at midday—and ate their breakfasts and suppers more casually, as many of us do today. The Dawsons' porringers are an important clue to how the adoption of modern dining took place. Like most important social changes, it was slow and partial; it did not completely change the ways of the people who experienced it (Sahlins 1981).

Table 13. Small Finds from the Features at the Dawson Family Site

Personal		**Clothing**	
Coins	9	Gilt Buttons	9
Mirror Glass	2	Brass Buttons	20
Watch Crystal	1	Pewter Buttons	4
Pendant	1	Tombac Buttons	2
Comb Fragment	1	Bone Button	1
Activities		Button Inlays	5
Jew's Harp	1	Brass Cuff Links	2
Clay Marble	1	Inlaid Cuff Links	2
Dividers/Calipers	1	Misc. Fasteners	3
Whetstone	1	Shoe Buckle	18
File	1	Other Buckles	3
Shovel	1	**Kitchen**	
Sickle	1	Knives	17
Drill Bits	2	Forks	2
Punches	2	Spoons	3
Misc. Tool Parts	2	Utensil Handles	6
Horseshoes	7	Jar/Can Lid Pieces	16
Horse Tack	14	**Sewing Related**	
Stirrups	3	Straight Pins	39
Harrow Tooth	1	Sewing Needles	4
Furniture		Scissors	2
Decorative Hardware	7		

C. BUTTONS, BUCKLES, AND FASHION

The Dawson Family Site produced a large and interesting collection of what we call "small finds," little items that we often recover intact (Table 13). These include, in particular, objects that people carried or wore on their persons, such as buttons and buckles from clothing. Hand tools, kitchen utensils, toys, and furniture hardware also end up in this category.

Forty buttons were found at the Dawson Site, most of them in the cellar (Feature 1). Buttons do have a function, but they are not strictly necessary, and from the beginning their purpose has been as much to ornament the wearer as to fasten his or her clothes. (Even today, some Amish and Mennonite groups consider buttons a violation of "plain" dressing.) The buttons from the Dawson Site clearly show their ornamental purpose. The most common type in the mid-1700s was the hollow brass button, which had

PLATE 19: Cuff Links or Sleeve Buttons

been introduced in the 1500s (Noël Hume 1970:88). These shiny objects were displayed in rows along men's coats, waistcoats, and breeches. The effect was enhanced by gilding, a thin layer of gold covering the brass button. By 1750 British metalworkers could make the gold layer so thin that gilt buttons were not particularly expensive, but they still cost more than brass specimens and were a purely ornamental refinement. Although the Dawsons were ordinary farmers, without any great wealth, the site nevertheless yielded nine ungilt brass buttons, pieces of six others, and 13 gilt specimens. We found nine pewter buttons, which were less expensive than brass but still nice enough to be used on gentlemen's clothing. One Massachusetts gentlemen took out a newspaper advertisement offering a reward for the return of a stolen coat with "stampt pewter buttons," and other accounts describe the attire of runaway servants as including pewter buttons. In addition, pewter, owing to its low melting point, was often used by home craftsmen to make molded buttons (Albert and Kent 1949:6). Three "tombac" buttons, another type common in the eighteenth century, were found. The word "tombac" describes both the material, an alloy of brass with an arsenic additive, and the mode of manufacture. These buttons responded well to polishing, which produced a finish that resembled that of low-grade silver (Luscomb 1967:197).

In addition to buttons used on coats and breeches, several sleeve buttons or cuff links were found at the Dawson Family Site (Plate 19). Sleeve buttons are easily distinguished from other buttons by the presence of a wire link connecting two pieces, or a worn or broken shank caused by the friction of the wire link, a condition not present on shanks attached by thread (Noël Hume 1970:380). Sleeve buttons were made of the same materials as other buttons, but because the shape of the disks changed a good deal over the course of the eighteenth century, many sleeve buttons can be dated. Sleeve buttons of the early eighteenth century were usually octagonal, and they were

larger than those of the mid-century. Early specimens measured about eleven-sixteenths of an inch in diameter, while those of later years decreased in size to approximately one-half inch in diameter. They changed in shape as well, with round and oval sleeve buttons becoming the rule by 1750 (Calver and Bolton 1950:224-227; Noël Hume 1970:381). Two pairs of octagonal brass sleeve buttons, one pair measuring nine-sixteenths of an inch and the other one-half inch in diameter, both with an intricate geometric design, were recovered from the Dawson Site.

and semiprecious stones (Albert and Kent 1949:4). Buttons made of paste were almost always ornamental. They were used to link the ruffled cuffs of a man's shirt or multiple buttonholed, folded boot-sleeves of the coats and waistcoats (Warwick et al. 1965:154-156). The delicate structure of the diminutive paste sleeve buttons suggests their use as a decorative fastener—aesthetically pleasing, but functionally impractical—as opposed to those sturdily constructed, intended to withstand the rigorous activities of farming. These high-fashion paste

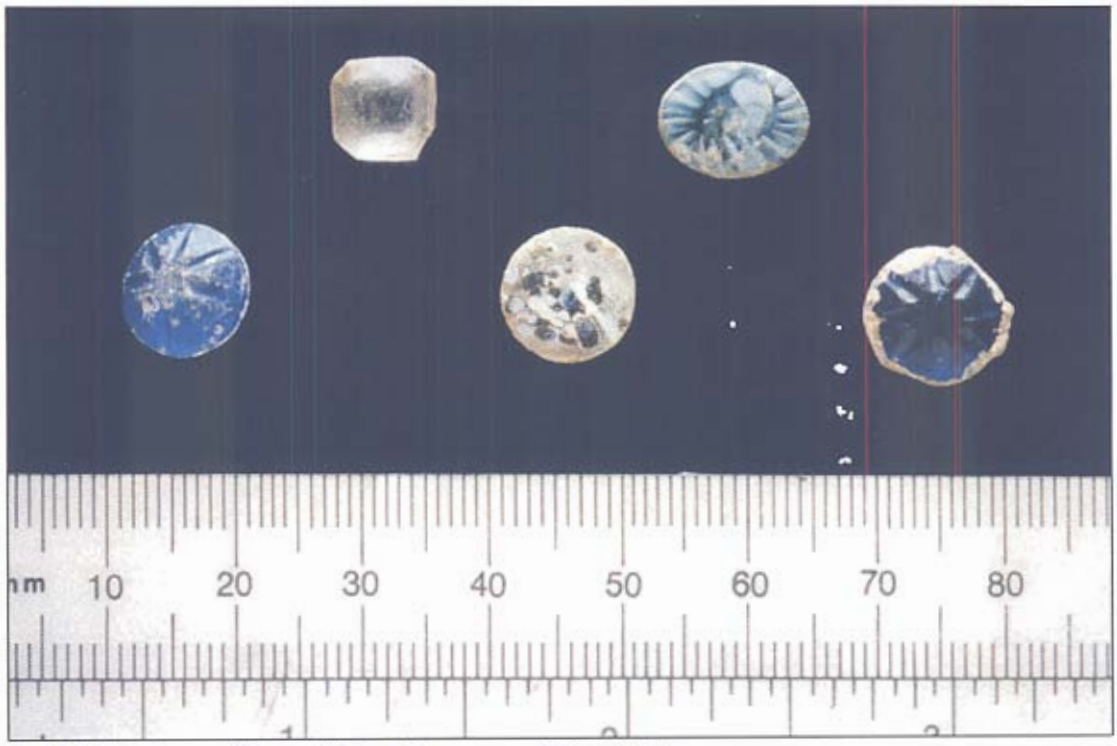

PLATE 20: Paste "Stones" from Buttons and Cuff Links

Thomas Dawson's octagonal cuff links were therefore long out of fashion by his death. They remind us of the many "old" items in his probate inventory (discussed in Chapter I).

More up to date were several sleeve buttons constructed using a copper or brass back with an inlaid glass or paste stone, along with unset inlays (Plate 20). Paste, or "strass," is a form of faux gemstone invented around 1734 in France, which inexpensively simulates colored precious

sleeve buttons, along with the gilt and tombac coat buttons and the other sleeve buttons, tell us something about Thomas Dawson himself. Although he was not wealthy and did not spend heavily on household goods, he dressed well and was willing to spend money to have some of the latest fashions. Similar items have been found on other farm sites in Delaware, including the Augustine Creek South Site (Bedell et al. 1998b) and the William Strickland Plantation Site (Catts et al. 1995).

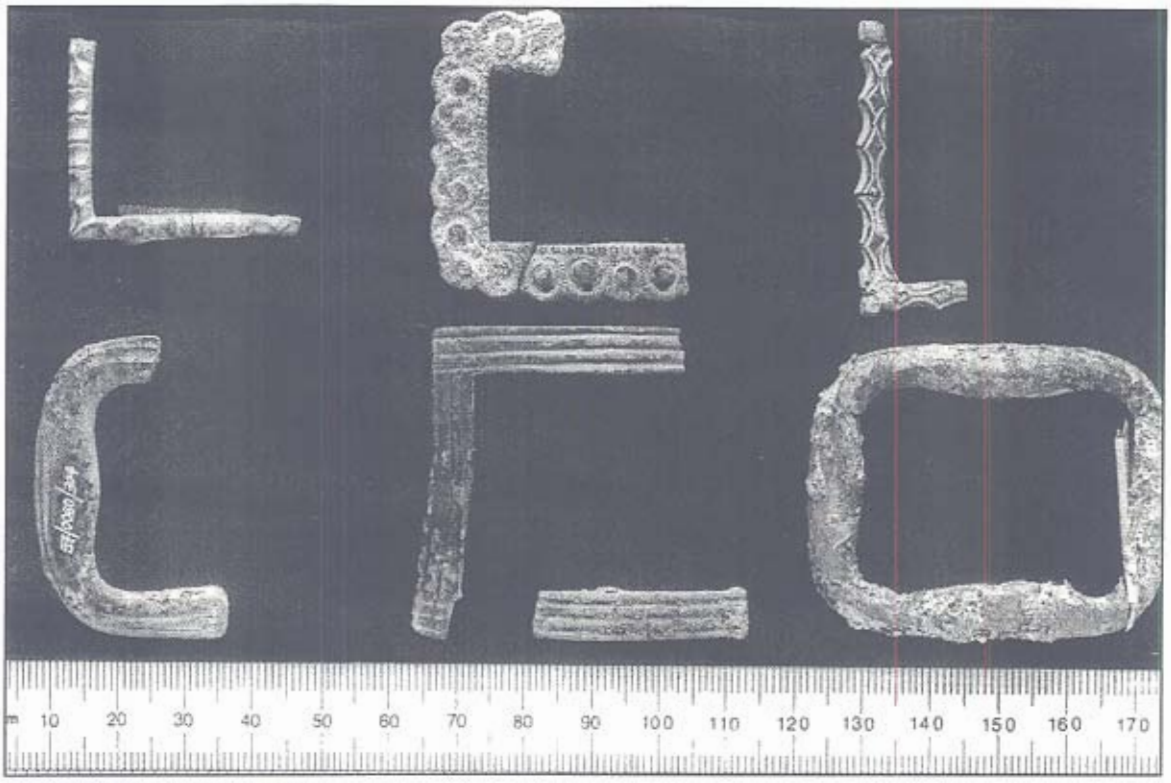

PLATE 21: Shoe Buckles

Sixteen shoe buckles were found at the site (Plate 21). During the eighteenth century, the shoe buckle was another aspect of dress whose function was overshadowed by its decorative purpose. Originating among the royalty of Europe during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, shoe buckles quickly replaced wide starched bows as the preferred fastener for both men's and women's shoes (Wilson 1969:175). The shoe buckles worn by the wealthy were usually made from gold or silver and were sometimes inlaid with diamonds. Buckles worn by the masses were made from a variety of materials, including brass, copper, jet, pinchbeck, steel, gun-metal, and, in some instances, wood. Occasionally, they would be inlaid with paste or glass stones. Shoe buckles were initially small square or oval forms placed high on the instep. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the buckles had evolved into large frames strapped over the instep (Warwick et al. 1965). Around 1730 shoe buckles began to be manufactured in the intricately carved style of rococo design. Shoe buckles of the eighteenth century were so ornate, often elaborately carved, inlaid, or inscribed, that they were frequently more expensive than the shoes themselves, costing as much as £6 per pair. The shoe buckle's period of popularity was relatively short; by the end of the eighteenth century shoe buckles were abruptly replaced by laces. Bucklemakers in England, desperate to protect their livelihood, asked the Prince of Wales to revert to the wearing of buckles, but royal intervention did nothing to stop the trend toward tied shoes (Abbitt 1973:27).

The shoe buckles from the Dawson Site were all brass or copper, with incised or molded designs for decoration. Neither frames capable of accommodating inlaid stones (either real or paste) nor any inscriptions were found among the identified shoe-buckle fragments. Shoe buckles of the kind recovered from this site were of course less expensive than those inlaid with stones or made from gold or silver.

Nevertheless, shoe buckles made from less desirable metals and set with paste stones were still considered valuable enough to be listed in wills, or advertised in newspapers as stolen items. In fact, buckles with carved frames were a coveted possession, resulting from the labors of a master craftsman. Not until 1769 was a stamping machine invented that enabled buckle frames to be pressed from prepared dies (Abbitt 1973:26). The Dawsons' shoe buckles reinforce the impression given by the cuff links and other buttons that someone on the site liked to dress fashionably.

D. KITCHENWARES AND FINE DINING

The desire for material goods that could enhance one's social standing and make life more beautiful extended beyond clothes. As good manners and social mobility pervaded eighteenth-century thought, manufacturers began to produce more goods designed to exhibit a person's proficiency in the fine art of genteel behavior. Such was the case with the simple knife and fork. During the early eighteenth century, forks were still somewhat of a novelty. In areas of Europe and America some groups, especially the poorer classes, continued the age-old tradition of eating with the fingers from communal bowls (Panati 1987). But to those who kept up with such things, the old style of dining had long come to seem rude and primitive. Dr. Alexander Hamilton, an English physician traveling through the colonies in 1744, recorded this scene at the table of a Delaware Valley ferrykeeper: "They used neither knife, fork, spoon, plate, or napkin. . . .I looked upon this as a picture of that primitive simplicity before the mechanic arts supplyed them with instruments for the luxury and elegance of life" (Bridenbaugh 1948:8). Merely owning a fork was not enough; a man would be looked down upon if he were not adept at using it (Carson 1994). The use of a knife and fork was part of a larger overhaul in daily activities and personal mannerisms during the eighteenth century that called for a seemingly endless array of artifacts directly tied to a new set of standards for behavior.

The Dawson Site yielded three forks and 17 knife fragments representing at least eight utensils, as well as pieces of two pewter spoons. Six fragments of bone utensil handles were also found, three of which it was possible to mend back into one piece. All of the knives and forks had bone handles. With two of the forks and three of the knives, enough of the handle survived intact to identify it as a "pistol-grip" design, popular during the first half of the eighteenth century (Plate 22) (Neumann 1984; Noël Hume 1970). Several of the handle fragments had four small drilled holes arranged in a diamond pattern to accommodate a decorative inlay. The inlays indicate that the knives and forks from the Dawson Site were from a matching, ornamented, set. During the first half of the eighteenth century, most people owned odd-lot assortments of utensils. After about 1760, archaeological contexts begin to show a decided preference for matching sets of everything, from knives and forks to ceramics. Written records increasingly mention matching sets of other items, such as diningroom chairs (Carson 1994), indicating a strong overall preference for objects made to go together.

With the addition of the fork to the colonial place setting, knives underwent a physical change that had functional as well as behavioral implications. Prior to the end of the seventeenth century, table knives had narrow blades ending in a point used to spear cut pieces of food. With the appearance of the fork, knives lost their pointed tips in favor of flattened, or, in later years, rounded ends (Neumann 1984; Noël Hume 1970). This simple change was quite significant to the people of the eighteenth century. A knife could not now be used to pick up food, and a person could not get by without knowing how to use a fork at the table. Moreover, failure to properly exhibit a mastery of the new tableware was considered a sign of bad manners and a general lack of refinement (Carson 1994). Before the advent of knives with rounded tips, it was acceptable for a man to pick his teeth with the point of his knife; this was an act abhorred during the eighteenth century, with its striving for civility (Panati

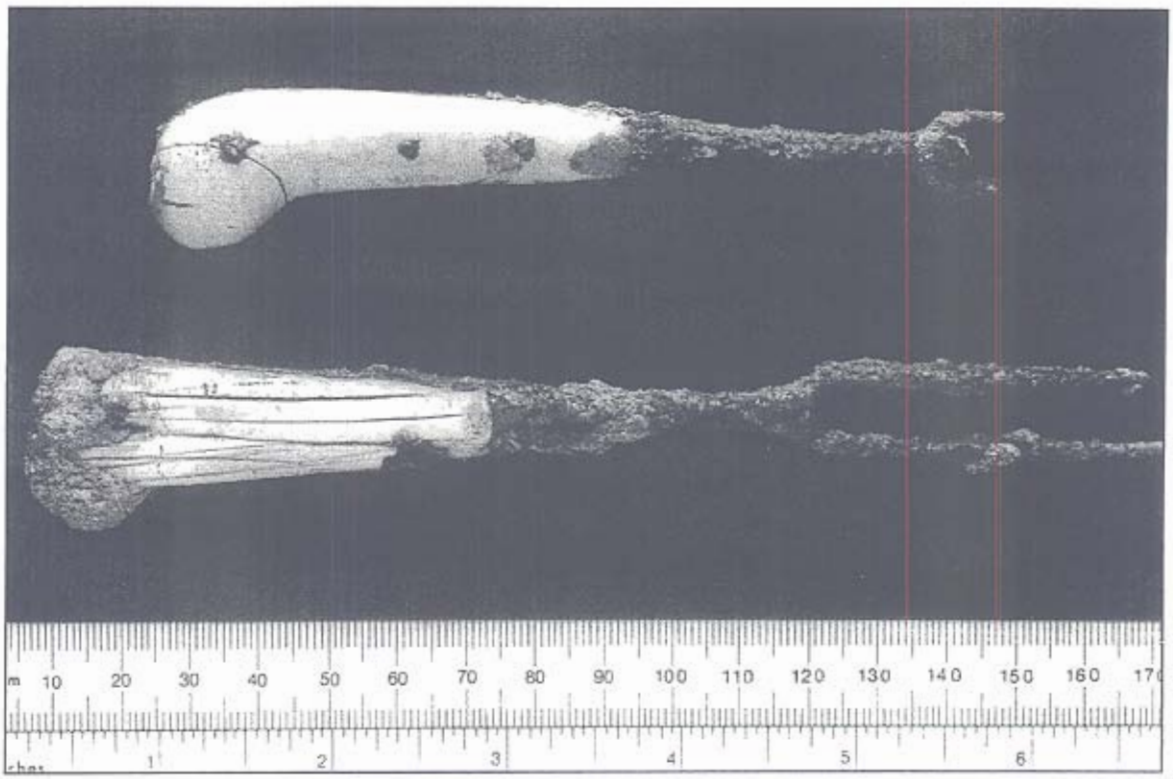

PLATE 22: Forks

1987). Three of the knives recovered from the Dawson Site had wide, slightly upward-arching blades, one with the bulbous tip intact. This type of knife was common from 1700 to 1770 and was designed exclusively for use in tandem with a fork.

Knives and forks were, along with the tea service, props for a new kind of socializing that emphasized manners and the knowledge of new rules of behavior. Nobody could aspire to enter "genteel society" without a knowledge of this new etiquette. Even among more ordinary people, the ability to take tea properly and comport oneself acceptably at dinner became an essential part of respectability. The artifacts found at the Dawson Site show us that the Dawsons were, in these terms, fully respectable people. They took tea from china dishes and used matching knives and forks, and we can assume that they knew how to use these objects properly. Similar artifacts from the dwellings of other ordinary Delaware farmers (Bedell et al. 1998b; De Cunzo et al. 1992; Grettler et al. 1995) show us that the Dawsons were by no means unusual in this regard, and the desire to participate in the new sociability of tea and table was widespread in their society.

E. TOBACCO PIPES AND INDIVIDUALITY

We found 588 pieces of white clay tobacco pipes at the Dawson Family Site, 402 from the features. This is a rather high number for a Delaware Valley site, but still low compared to sites in the Chesapeake region, where some sites yield thousands of pipe fragments. One intact, highly decorated pipe bowl was found in Feature 7 (Figure 20). This specimen bore the coat of arms and motto of the English royal family, a nice symbol of loyalty to the motherland at this colonial outpost. A different sort of symbolism may be contained in the large number of pipe bowls we identified bearing the initials TD. The initials were applied by the maker of the pipes, in England. "TD" was a common maker's mark in the early and mid-eighteenth century, and TD

pipes have been found on other sites in Delaware (Catts et al. 1995; Grettler et al. 1996; Walker 1966). But nowhere have TD pipes made up as large a percentage of that total as at the Dawson Site. We found 21 pipe bowls with makers' marks on the site, and 18 bore the initials "TD." Several different types of mark were represented, so it was not simply a case of Dawson having bought all his pipes in one lot. It is possible that Dawson chose the TD pipes because the initials matched his own. The desire to stamp possessions with a personal monogram was common in the eighteenth century, and wealthy men in Britain and the colonies had their personal seals applied to wine bottles, pipes, clothing, and other objects. Thomas Dawson was not wealthy enough to order specially made objects marked with his monogram, but he could take advantage of the coincidence that his initials matched those of several British pipemakers.

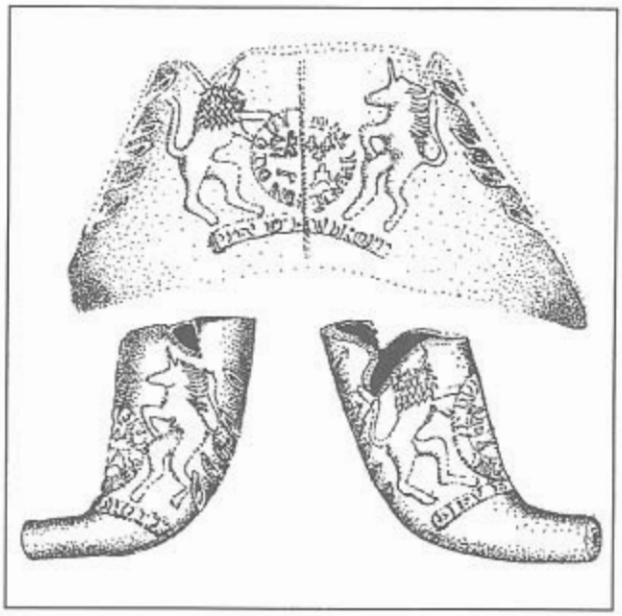

FIGURE 20: Drawing of a Tobacco Pipe with the Royal Coat of Arms

F. A FEW OTHER THINGS

Perhaps the most impressive single object from the Dawson Site was the gunlock we found in the cellar on the last day of the excavations (Plate 23). The lock was from a hunting or fowling piece, not a military gun, and was probably made in England before 1750. It was very well preserved by the basic soil in the cellar, and after it had been cleaned even the threads on the screws were clearly visible. The lock is unusual in that it seems to be a hybrid of pieces made in different times and places. The lock and striking plate are sleek and very well made, and the lock had mounts where decorative brass plates were once attached. The hammer, however, was larger and much more crudely made than the rest of the lock, and it had an odd-looking oversized screw to hold in the flint. The hammer was probably a later addition, not up to the standards of the original gunsmith. When it was new, this gun was a fine piece, but by the time it found its way into the ground it was old and had been repaired in rather slapdash fashion. The condition of the gunlock is particularly interesting in light of the Dawsons' inventory, discussed in Chapter I, which describes so many of his possessions as "old." As he aged, Thomas Dawson seems to have slid down the economic scale a little, so that he was not able to keep up the standard of living he had attained earlier in his life. The glass found at the Dawson Site included pieces of bottles, tumblers, stemmed drinking glasses, and small vials. A nearly complete vial of the type used to hold pharmaceuticals was found in the cellar. Fragments of drinking glasses point, again, to the refinement of the Dawsons' table, and the pharmaceutical vials indicate another kind of consumer good. Two pieces of mirror glass were found, and a glass disk that we think is the crystal from a watch. If this glass piece is from a watch, it would be an important discovery. It came from the lower levels of the cellar, amidst artifacts we believe date to Thomas Dawson's lifetime. Dawson's inventory does not indicate that he owned a watch, and in his lifetime watches were significant on several levels. They were fashionable ornaments, and they were also both tools and symbols of a new business mentality in which time was money and a man of affairs kept careful track of how he and his employees spent their hours.

The tools from the site included sewing needles, pins, and two pairs of scissors for making or repairing clothes, as well as tools for working on

the farm and around the house. One interesting item was a broken, badly rusted pair of dividers or calipers, which would have been used for careful measuring or drawing. We also found a small pair of tongs called a "smoker's companion," used for picking up a coal from the fire to light a pipe. A Jew's harp points to the making of music at the Dawson place, and a clay marble, to children's games. In all, the artifact collection from the Dawson Site provides a remarkable glimpse of life on one small eighteenth-century farm.

PLATE 23: Gunlock and Three Gunflints

G. MESSAGE AND MEANING

One way to think about the meaning of archaeological artifacts, or any part of material culture, is to ask what messages the objects may have been intended to convey. All things made to be seen by others—clothes, teacups, building facades, gardens—are instruments of communication. Although the messages they send may not be complex, they may nonetheless be of the highest importance to both senders and receivers. As James A. Moore wrote, ". . .style has a heavy information content—only a few bits of information are transmitted; however, these bits are heavily invested with meaning. By implication, style will not carry trivial information" (Moore 1983:184). Artifacts associated with highly visible categories such as the outer layer of clothing and the exterior of dwellings can transmit the most information to the largest number of people over the longest period of time (Wobst 1977:328-329). What messages were the occupants of the Thomas Dawson Site trying to send about themselves?

At first glance, it may seem that the signals were contradictory. Surely, we might think, the message sent by a decorated teacup was undercut or canceled by using that teacup in a run-down house on a farm without even a privy. The enthusiasm with which ordinary Delaware farmers took to many of the eighteenth century's new fashions suggests that they, at least, had no

trouble understanding what these objects conveyed. To them, there was no contradiction in using new-style consumer goods in their old-fashioned homes. Indeed, it might be that the apparent contradiction is part of the message. Their clothes, dishes, and other accessories show that their log cabins and rough-hewn farms did not define these people, or limit their aspirations. By acquiring "high-style" possessions they may have been asserting that despite their narrow circumstances they belonged to something larger, to the international high-style "culture" that transcended established ethnic and economic boundaries (Pendery 1992:58). To the aristocrats whose fashions they copied, they may have been saying, "I'm as good a man (or woman) as you."

If the residents of the Dawson Site spent so much of their decidedly limited resources on what seem like showy but nonessential trinkets, it may be because, to them, these items were anything but trivial. The message these items sent about their owners was a very important one.

H. ARCHAEOLOGY AND PROBATE INVENTORIES

1. Inventories and Eighteenth-Century History

We have two main ways of approaching the material world of the eighteenth century: through the archaeology itself and through probate inventories. Probate inventories are lists of the possessions of a person who has recently died. Thomas Dawson's own inventory, which is presented in Chapter I, has been referred to a number of times in this report. Such lists were made for estate and tax purposes in many parts of Europe beginning in the later Middle Ages, and later in colonial America (Jones 1980:277; Shammas 1990:2). These lists of possessions are sometimes very detailed, itemizing chairs, pots, pigs, and even bags, and provide a marvelous window into the homes of people who lived long ago.

Historians interested in home life have made a minor industry out of studying probate inventories. Many of the discussions about eighteenth-century material life written over the past 20 years contain references to these documents (Carr and Walsh 1980, 1994; Main 1988; Shammas 1989; Weatherill 1988). Inventories have proved useful to historians in the study of such issues as standards of living, overall wealth, self-sufficiency, economic diversification, and, through the presence of clocks in these lists, the spread of our modern, regimented way of using time (Shackel 1993). Historians have discussed at some length the possible problems of bias in the sample obtained using probate inventories—age bias, as these inventories are mostly for older individuals, and wealth bias, as many poor people are excluded from the sample. There seems to be general agreement, however, that probate inventories are quite accurate (Jones 1982; Main 1974). But are these documents really accurate? Most classes of eighteenth-century documents cannot readily be checked, but probate inventories can be verified, at least in part, by comparing them with the findings of archaeology (Bedell 2000; Martin 1991; Walsh 1992; Yentsch 1990).

Because Thomas Dawson's inventory survives, along with a large sample of artifacts that appear to date to his lifetime, the present research offered the opportunity to take stock of the relationship between probate inventories and archaeology in Delaware. The Dawsons' farm is the fourth excavated site in Delaware for which an inventory also survives; the others are the William Strickland Plantation (Catts et al. 1995), the Hawthorne Site (Coleman et al. 1984), and the Charles Robinson Plantation (Thomas et al. 1994). In these cases we can make a direct comparison between the archaeological findings and the inventories. Beyond this, we can compare the inventories in general to the 12 eighteenth-century farm sites that have been professionally excavated and fully reported for New Castle and Kent counties (Table 14). Our sources for inventory data are the 200 New Castle County inventories compiled during the study of the Augustine Creek North and South sites (Bedell et al. 1998b) and an additional study of Kent County inventories undertaken as part of this investigation. The Kent County study

Table 14. List of Excavated Eighteenth-Century Sites in Delaware

Site	Date	Type	Date of Inventory	Reference
John Powell	1690-1735	Farm		Grettler et al. 1995
Augustine Creek South	1726-1760	Farm		Bedell et al. 1998b
Wm. Strickland	1726-1760	Farm	1754	Catts et al. 1995
Dawson Family	1735-1756	Farm	1754	
Augustine Creek North	1750-1810	Tenant Farm or Dwelling		Bedell et al. 1998b
Charles Robinson	1762-1783	Farm	1776	Thomas et al. 1994
McKean/Cochran I	1750-1790	Tenant Farm		Bedell et al. 1998a
Benjamin Wynn	1765-1822	Tenant Farm and Blacksmith's Shop		Grettler et al. 1996
Whitten Road	1760-1830	Farm		Shaffer et al. 1988
William Hawthorne	1760-1900	Farm	1789	Coleman et al. 1984
Bloomsbury	1761-1814	Tenant Farm occupied by Native Americans		Heite et al. 1998
Darrach Store	1775-1860	Store, then Tenant House		De Cunzo et al. 1992
McKean/Cochran II	1790-1830	Farm		Bedell et al. 1998a

included 190 inventories, most of them from the 1740s, 1750s, and 1760s. We also collected a few inventories from the 1720s, 1730s, and 1790s, to get a longer time perspective. We followed the general methods of Carr and Walsh (1988) and Gloria Main (1988) so that our data from Delaware would be roughly comparable with their results from New England and the Chesapeake region.

Inventories tell us about many things that archaeologists never find. They list objects that do not survive in the ground, such as clothing, bed linens, rugs, paintings, and books, as well as valuable objects that were rarely lost or thrown away, such as silver buckles and gold jewelry. Archaeology gives us an incomplete picture of eighteenth-century life, and the picture we get, as the inventories show us, is in many ways also misleading. For example, for the time before the introduction of creamware in the 1760s, archaeologists find rather few plates on farm sites, but after 1770 plates become very common. This does not mean, however, that before 1760 farmers in Delaware did not use plates; they simply ate from plates made of pewter, which were rarely thrown away, or of wood, which do not survive. Kent County inventories show us that in the 1740s and 1750s at least 75 percent even of poor families owned pewter dishes, and 100 percent of middling and well-off families owned such dishes (Table 15). A picture of eighteenth-century life drawn entirely from archaeology would be greatly impoverished.

Our main objective in studying the Delaware probate inventories was to learn more about how people in the eighteenth century lived. We wanted to know what kind of furniture most people had in their houses, how many of them had pewter dishes or equipment for serving tea, whether they read books or made music, what

Table 15. Presence of Selected Items in Kent County Probate Inventories, 1740-1769

Item	Total Value of Inventory		
	Less than £50	£50 to £225	More than £225
Total Number of Cases	49	48	24
		Percent of Households Possessing	
Household Articles			
bed/table linen	39	55	78
earthenware	71	85	83
teaware	31	53	87
metal pot	96	96	100
clock/watch	2	6	30
table forks	35	49	73
pewter	78	94	96
books	39	74	70
Furniture			
beds	100	100	100
tables	63	78	96
chairs	61	72	96
chests	78	98	91
desks	4	11	61
cupboards	10	19	39
dining tables	6	4	22
Tools			
spinning wheel	65	91	100
loom	10	23	39
dairy items	20	23	17
gun	35	57	87
wagon/cart	8	53	87
blacksmith's tools	.	.	8
carpenter's tools	10	28	43
shoemaker's tools	4	4	22
cider mill	.	6	30
still	.	.	17

sorts of luxuries they could afford. Because we tools as spinning wheels, looms, and cider presses. The main findings of the study are summarized in Table 15.

We learn from the inventories that the average Delaware house was rather simply furnished. Beds, tables, chairs, and chests are the only items of furniture found in a majority of households.

Although some richer people also had desks, cupboards, or chests of drawers, in general they simply had more of the beds, tables, chairs, and chests. On average, poorer people had one or two beds, one table, three to four chairs, and one chest, while wealthier people had five to six beds, three tables, 11 chairs, and three to four chests. (Households in the middle group had three beds, three tables, and eight chairs.) The results in New Castle County were very similar, although even fewer poorer people in that sample were likely to have chairs or tables (25 percent in 1730-1749 and 44 percent in the 1760s). People without chairs probably sat on stools or benches, items that the inventory takers did not think it worth while to record.

Table 15 does not list clothing, because everybody had some, but the inventories do give us further evidence about the interest of many ordinary people in fine dressing. Tailor James Johns (d. 1766) had in his shop silver buckles, silver buttons, and a stock of silk cloth. The list of Thomas Tarrant's (d. 1740) clothes takes up the whole first page of his inventory, and includes a "Persian waistcoat," a cloth riding coat, a silk cap, five wigs, seven pairs of shoes, and a silk handkerchief. On the other hand, most inventories of ordinary farmers do not describe elaborate clothing, and many list only "the deceased's wearing apparel," with no description at all. Thomas Dawson's inventory lists only very plain clothes, except for "1 old fine hat," and one would not imagine from the inventory that he owned the fancy cuff links and shoe buckles we found in the excavation of his farm.

Books were rather common: about 70 percent of middling and wealthy households owned them, and nearly 40 percent of poor households had at least one. The Bible was the most common book, but Kent County farmers also owned works on theology, history, law, and medicine.

Information about the distribution of certain tools is helpful to an understanding of the rural economy. It is often possible to identify professional craftsmen in the inventories, a topic addressed in Chapter V, and also to determine how much people did for themselves. Spinning wheels are common in inventories, showing that many people spun their own yarn or thread, but looms are much more rare. Many people must have sold their yarn, or put it out to a professional weaver and paid him or her to make it into cloth. It is also possible that woolen yarn was used for knitting. In any event, it is clear that most people had to buy the cloth they used in their clothing. The count of "dairy items" in the lists is surely too low, since the inventories also show that almost all farmers kept dairy cows. More prosperous farmers were much more likely to have more expensive tools like carts and cider mills, and some farmers probably supplemented their income by renting these items to their poorer neighbors. About half of farmers owned a gun.

The overall impression is that while a few people in the eighteenth century owned a great many material objects, most people led very simple lives. Joseph Nixon, who died in March 1750, left an estate valued at only 11 pounds 2 shillings, listed in Table 16. Nixon and his wife

Table 16. Inventory of Thomas Nixon, March 15, 1750

One bed & bedding
Wearing apparel
Widow's wearing apparel
Large old Bible
Looking glass
small old tea kettle
3 chairs
1 chest with meal in it
1 trunk with lumber
hackled flax, 5 small pieces new linning & 1corse towel
2 old trowels & plum line & rule
1 old mugg with some brown sugar
Old earthenware & old tinn
1 old piggin & snuff bottle
2 turkeys

owned little beyond a table, three chairs, a chest, a trunk, and some clothes. They did have a Bible, but their only luxury, if such it can be called, was a single mirror. Their kitchen was finished with a teakettle, a mug with some brown sugar, and "old earthenware & tin." According to the inventories, a majority of poorer people did not have table forks, bed linens, or fine dishes, while about a quarter did not have pewter plates or coarse earthenwares, and more than a third did not even own a table. The only items that almost everyone had were clothes, beds, and metal cooking pots. Even among middling farmers, those worth more than £50, only about half had bed linens, teawares, or table forks, and 28 percent did not own a chair. But, again, were the probate inventories accurate? Can we trust their grim picture of eighteenth-century material life?

2. *Testing Inventory Data*

Although inventories are a marvelous source for learning about eighteenth-century life, the circumstances of their preparation must be taken into consideration. They were made by neighbors of the deceased who were appointed by the court for this task, and we know very little about how these amateur assessors went about their work or how they learned to do this rather complex job. A study of inventories from various parts of the country suggests that they were prepared according to unwritten rules about what was countable and what was not. Inventories from New England list houses and land, but southern inventories do not (Carr and Walsh 1980:82; Jones 1982:278). In Delaware inventories, houses and land are not generally listed, but we have no knowledge about how this decision was made or how it was communicated to those who prepared the inventories. In a few cases, Delaware inventories do list land, suggesting that some assessors did not fully grasp the local procedures. A few other rules used in Delaware can be surmised from the inventories. For example, the inventories almost always include the value of crops standing in the field, but they never list the contents of gardens or fruit on the tree. Small sums of money rarely appear, although the inventories of rich men often list larger sums. Could it be that the inventory takers, by common consent, refrained from listing the contents of the widow's purse? And what other rules, about which we know nothing, caused people to omit certain items?

Historians have used inventories to estimate past standards of living primarily by counting how many of the inventories in their sample include selected objects, from such essentials as cooking pots to such luxuries as silver plate. Using tables like Table 15 above, researchers try to find out how the number of people who owned certain objects changed over time. Carr and Walsh (1988, 1994) have created what they call an "amenities index" to study the level of comfort in colonial homes in Virginia and Maryland, and Main (1988) has applied the same technique in studying New England homes. The amenities list includes 12 items that are intended to represent a range of goods, from necessities to luxuries. Among the items chosen are bed or table linen, table forks, books, and silver plate. Figures calculated for the appearance of these items in inventories show that over the period from 1650 to 1775 they become more common in all areas and among all income groups. These inventory studies suggest, therefore, that standards of living were rising for most people in the colonies. Given the large number of inventories available for study, simple errors by the assessors would presumably average out over time, but what if there are systematic distortions in the documents? What if the unwritten rules changed over time, so that some items came to be counted more often, or less often? Such changes would greatly undermine the usefulness of inventories for studying long-term change. To test the accuracy of the inventories, we have compared them with the archaeological record for several items that survive archaeologically.

a. Ceramics

Two of the 12 items tracked by the Carr and Walsh amenities index are "coarse earthenware" and "refined earthenware." The results of the studies by these researchers show a steadily increasing percentage of households with these

Table 17. Presence of Selected Items on Eighteenth-Century Archaeological Sites in Delaware

Site	Dates	Earthen-wares	Refined Wares	Forks	Spoons	Chamber Pots	Drinking Glasses	Tea-wares
John Powell[1]	1691-1735	x	x	x	.	.	x	.
Augustine Creek S.[2]	1726-1760	x	x	x	.	x	x	x
Wm. Strickland[3]	1726-1762	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Dawson Family	1740-1780	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Augustine Creek N.[2]	1750-1810	x	x	.	.	x	x	x
Charles Robinson[5]	1762-1781	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
McKean/Cochran I[6]	1750-1790	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Benjamin Wynn[7]	1765-1820	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Whitten Road[8]	1750-1830	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
William Hawthorne[9]	1750-1961	x	x	x	x	.	.	x
Bloomsbury[10]	1761-1814	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Darrach Store[11]	1775-1860	x	x	.	.	x	x	x
McKean/Cochran II[6]	1790-1830	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Note: x = present, . = absent. *Sources: [1]Grettler et al. 1995; [2] Bedell et al. 1998b; [3] Catts et al. 1995; [5] Thomas et al. 1994; Bedell et al. 1998a; [7]Grettler et al. 1996; [8] Shaffer et al. 1988; [9]Coleman et al. 1984; [10]Heite et al. 1998; [11] De Cunzo et al. 1992*

objects, suggesting a rising level of comfort. Archaeologists, of course, know something about ceramics. We use ceramics to define cultures, track migrations, and identify cultural changes all over the world, and we have devoted a great deal of energy to measuring, describing, and dating them. We are sometimes accused of being obsessed with potsherds, and the charge has some merit. We have developed this obsession for two reasons. First, ceramics last for thousands of years in almost any kind of soil, and second, they are very sensitive cultural indicators. The objects blandly inventoried as "earthen pots" might be many different things, and to a skilled archaeologist might tell many different stories. These pots might be English, Dutch, French, Italian, or American. They might be the distinctive products of the Philadelphia area, or the identifiable works of some known local potter. They might be "Colonowares" made by slaves or Native Americans, showing a greater or lesser degree of affinity with pots from west Africa or with traditional Indian vessels. Whatever they are, they reflect changes in technology, diet, hygiene, and artistic taste. Because these matters would not have been of much interest to inventory takers, they are not mentioned, and it is only by digging the pots out of the ground that we learn about them.

Archaeologists have learned that ceramics were everywhere in eighteenth-century America (Table 17). They have been found on every domestic site. For the colonial period, on which most inventory studies have focused, coarse earthenwares are ubiquitous (although in some parts of the country they become rather rare after 1780 [Bedell et al. 1998a]). Every colonial plantation, tenant farm, urban tenement, and slave quarter that has ever been tested has yielded sherds of coarse earthenwares, in most cases by the thousands. "Refined earthenwares" is a more difficult category, since it is not clear that we divide coarse from refined wares in the way eighteenth-century potters or inventory takers did. Carr, Walsh, and Main say nothing about stonewares, some of which were used like refined earthenwares and some like coarse earthenwares, which further complicates the picture. In Delaware, inventories rarely specify ceramic types in detail before the 1770s, so it is difficult to make any comparisons. However,

ceramics that contemporary archaeologists consider refined wares have been recovered from most eighteenth-century sites, including all of the Delaware sites in our sample.

The statement that all eighteenth-century domestic sites yield earthenwares is subject to an objection: namely, that since archaeologists look for sites primarily by looking for ceramics, and date the sites primarily on the basis of the ceramics, if there were eighteenth-century households that did not use ceramics, archaeologists would never find them. We do, however, have ways of testing our ideas about the ubiquity of ceramics in American colonial life. For example, every time archaeologists dig next to a standing historic house, they find ceramics dating to all periods of its occupation. Standing houses, of course, belonged primarily to the wealthy, who could afford the materials and labor to erect more substantial buildings, although there are still a few standing colonial houses that belonged to those who were average or a little above. Other kinds of known sites can be tested as well, however, such as slave quarters, town blocks, forts, and sites identified from maps. As far as the authors are aware, coarse earthenwares have been found on every one. Even allowing for the possibility that there were certain poor or unusual people living in eighteenth-century America who did not have ceramics, some of the published numbers, taken from inventories, strike archaeologists as simply absurd. Gloria Main (1988) found that in rural Massachusetts, in the 1725-1749 period, only 69 percent of households worth more than £225 owned coarse earthenware. Neither in central Massachusetts nor in any other part of British America were there wealthy farmers without so much as a milk pan or crock to their name. Only 31 percent of these households reportedly owned refined earthenware, at a time when, archaeology tells us, many poor tenants owned delft bowls and white salt-glazed stoneware cups. In the New Castle County, Delaware, sample for the 1760s, ceramics are listed in only 67 percent of the inventories for the middling households worth between £50 and £225 (Bedell et al. 1998b:69). The accuracy of these numbers is doubtful, to say the least. Not even new and exotic ceramic forms necessarily appear in inventories: Anne Yentsch (1990) found that oriental porcelain teawares appear on archaeological sites in the Chesapeake by 1680, but their first listing in surviving Virginia probate inventories does not come until 1717.

As it happens, all of the inventories for excavated sites in Delaware do list ceramics, so we cannot directly test an inventory that does not list them. (William Peery's inventory, made in 1789, lists only "a lot of dishes," but this certainly could include earthenwares [Coleman et al.1984:226].) However, some inventories itemize ceramic dishes, and we can compare these lists to what was found in the ground. The William Strickland Plantation was occupied from about 1726 to 1760 by the family of a man who worked his way up from the bottom half of taxables in the county to the ninetieth percentile, not an unusual phenomenon in his time (Catts et al. 1995). His inventory, made in 1754, lists no more than 19 ceramic vessels (Table 18). Using a technique called "Minimum Vessel Analysis," which determines the smallest number of vessels that could have produced the sherds found in the ground, archaeologists identified 237 ceramic vessels from the site of his farm (Table 19). It is not just that the numbers don't agree—after all, the artifacts represent 35 years of occupation, and archaeologists have never been able to agree on how long a particular vessel found on a site might have remained in use—but that some whole categories of archaeological artifacts are omitted from the inventory. These include mugs and chamber pots, two items that are archaeologically ubiquitous but rare in inventories, as well as plates.

The inventory of Charles Robinson, a "yeoman" whose farm was occupied from about 1762 to 1783, lists "Tea delph ware one Nip [bowl] & 3 plates" and "3 earthen pots and 3 old pans Jug & 3 bottles." The archaeologists, however, found at least 528 vessels at his farm, including 58 teacups, 52 saucers, and dozens of American-made dishes or "pie plates" (Thomas et al. 1994). The apparent detail of the inventory is

Table 18. Ceramics Listed in William Strickland's Inventory

To 2 bowls & a Cheese Pat	2s, 0p
To 5 Old pots and 2 Old frying pans & Skillet	5s, 0p
To 6 Earthen pans	3s, 0p
To 6 Old Earthen pots	4s, 0p
To Teaware & some Bowles	12s, 0p

Table 19. Ceramics Identified Archaeologically at the William Strickland Site

237 total vessels			
teacups	19	dishes	8
saucers	10	serving plates	3
teapots	3	jars	4
posset cups	8	pots	2
plates	26	milk pans	23
porringers	4	butter pots	11
mugs/jugs	41	ointment pots	4
mush cups	2	chamber pots	9
small bowls	24	child's toy cup	1
large bowls	15	unidentified	20

Source: Catts et al. 1995

misleading, because many objects have obviously been omitted from this precise-looking list. Although we cannot check them archaeologically, some of the inventories in the Kent County study seem to have the same problem. The inventory of John Virden, a substantial farmer who died in 1769, does list obviously inadequate. It includes only "6 earthen potts, 5 full of lard," "3 earthen pots, 2 full of shugr," and "3 earthen potts with dirty fatt." No pans, dishes, bowls, or teacups are mentioned.

Even sites that were occupied by poor tenants sometimes yield impressive collections of ceramics. The Augustine Creek North Site is a small tenant farm site located on sloping ground next to a swampy stream, an undesirable location that strongly suggests its occupants were poor (Bedell et al. 1998b). Two collections of artifacts were identified archaeologically, one dating to the 1750s or 1760s and one dating to about 1800. The earlier material, which was better preserved, included coarse earthenware milk pans, crocks, and jars, slip-decorated dishes, and at least 10 ceramic mugs. The later material included several creamware plates, hand-painted pearlware teacups and saucers in floral designs, and at least one teapot. Late eighteenth-century slave quarter sites that have been excavated in Virginia have also yielded quite substantial numbers of ceramics, including refined earthenware teacups (Kelso 1984).

If earthenwares are archaeologically ubiquitous, one wonders why they were omitted from so many inventories. The reason may be simply that they were worth so little money. Even new earthenware vessels cost only a couple of pence, and old cracked or chipped ones must have been worth next to nothing. In Delaware inventories, the "wooden ware" (such as buckets) was often given a higher value than the earthernware. The purpose of inventories was to provide a guide for the division of estates, and heirs were not likely to quarrel over a few milk pans. It is for this same reason that inventories rarely list pins, scissors, thimbles, and razors, all objects that archaeologists find on almost every site. If this is the case, however, why are earthenwares listed more often in the households of the rich? And why do they become more common over time? We can suggest two factors that we believe contribute to these trends. First, it seems that the more earthenware people had, the more likely appraisers were to note it. A couple of bowls could be lumped into some miscellaneous category such as "lumber" or "whatnots in the shed," but by the middle of the 1700s rich farmers sometimes had whole rooms full of earthenware, including dozens of milk pans and large jars. Rich farmers undoubtedly had more earthenwares than poor farmers. Ceramics also became more common over the course of the eighteenth century, which helps to explain why the number of inventories reporting them increases (Deetz 1972). Minimum vessel counts are commonly in the dozens for sites from circa

1700, but in the hundreds for sites dating to the 1750s and later. The increased reporting of earthenwares reflects real differences, over time and across social classes, in the ownership of dishes and pots.

There are also factors internal to the inventories themselves that help to explain the increased reporting. Consideration of the Delaware inventories results in the strong impression that, in general, those for rich households were more detailed than those for poor households, and also that inventories became more detailed over the course of the eighteenth century. Although it would be difficult to test these statements quantitatively, there are numerous signs that point toward these conclusions. In Delaware, the oldest preserved inventories, dating to the 1690s, are extremely sketchy, and do not even enumerate cattle or horses. Very general terms such as "lumber" and "household trumpery" are very common early in the 1700s but grow less common over the course of the century. All of the room-by-room inventories in the Delaware sample are for wealthy households, and all date to after 1740. Archaeology and Orphans' Court documents tell us that some ordinary people did have outbuildings and houses with more than one room, so the lack of room-by-room inventories for ordinary households can only mean that the preparers of those inventories did not approach their task with the same rigor as those who inventoried elite homes.

The relationship between the distribution of ceramics in the archaeological record and their appearance in inventories is not the simple one portrayed by presence/absence tables such as those of Carr and Walsh and Main. Reporting reflects not only presence but the number of items and the level of detail in the inventory. A graph showing that the percentage of households owning earthenwares rose over the period 1650 to 1750 means something different when we know that the actual value in all periods was close to 100 percent. Such tables may be better guides to the ownership of expensive items, like silver plate or looms (Shammas 1989), but for very cheap objects such as earthenware they have little value.

b. Other Household Goods

Archaeology suggests that other kinds of household goods are also under-reported in the probate inventories. We have already mentioned sewing items, such as thimbles and scissors. Children's toys are also rarely mentioned; from a study of inventories one would think that eighteenth-century children had none. Most toys were made of perishable materials, such as wood, but a few kinds of toys, such as ceramic marbles and toy-sized cups, are regularly found by archaeologists. Another striking example of under-reported items is tobacco pipes, which are mentioned in none of the 400 Delaware inventories we have studied but have been found on every eighteenth-century site that has been excavated in the state. As tobacco pipes were very cheap, their presence or absence has few economic implications; it may, however, have a cultural significance. Comparison of sites in the Delaware Valley with sites in the Chesapeake shows that Chesapeake sites yield, on average, about 10 times as many tobacco pipe fragments (Bedell et al. 1998a). We do not know whether Delaware Valley farmers actually smoked less than those in the Chesapeake or just used a type of pipe that did not survive, such as corncob pipes.

Many inventories do not list spoons, although spoons have been recovered from all but two of the excavated eighteenth-century sites in Delaware. William Strickland's inventory lists only silver teaspoons, but archaeologists found three pewter tablespoons and a large iron cooking spoon at his farm. William Peery's and Thomas Dawson's inventories list "knives and forks," but no spoons, and archaeologists found spoons at both of these sites.

Forks represent a rather special case, since they were only introduced into the colonies around 1700. Forks are listed in all the inventories for sites where they have been found

archaeologically, so there is no direct conflict. There is, however, an interesting pattern in the Delaware inventories we have studied. The number of New Castle County inventories with forks peaks in the 1760s and then declines in the 1790s. Data published by Carr and Walsh (1994) end in 1775, but they show the number of households with listed forks leveling off at that point. It seems highly unlikely that fork use declined under the early Republic. Figure 21 interprets the rise and fall of forks in the Delaware inventories as the product of two variables, the actual ownership of forks and the number of appraisers who reported them. (Although Figure 21 lumps all wealth groups together, the trend holds for rich, poor, and middling households.) When forks were rare and something of a luxury, appraisers probably mentioned them most of the time when they were present. After they became ordinary objects, some appraisers evidently began to ignore them, or to lump them into such categories as "goodes in a chest." Again, forks were not very expensive items, but the vagaries of their reporting nevertheless suggests further difficulties with inventories as sources.

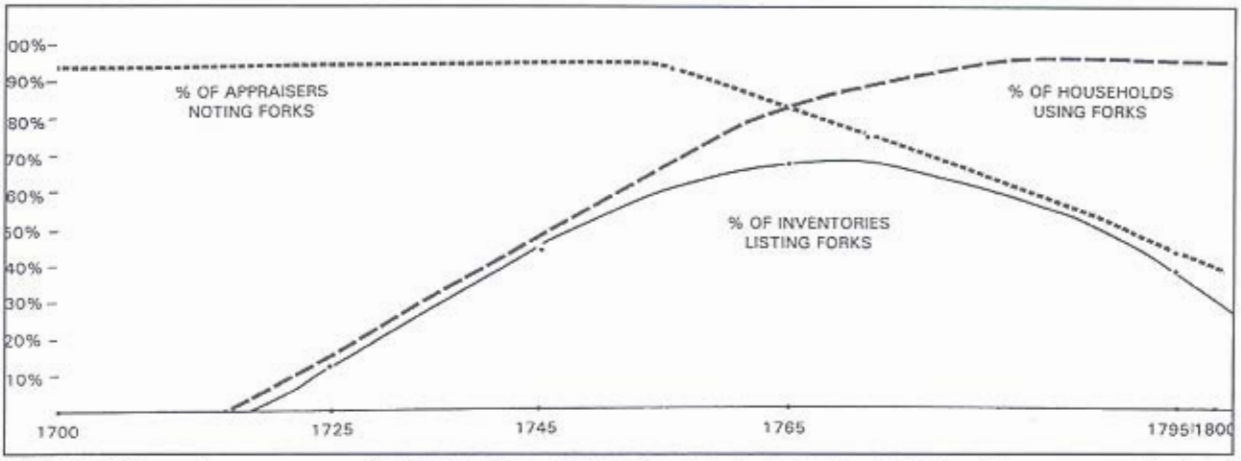

FIGURE 21: Appearance of Forks in New Castle County Probate Inventories, Shown as a Product of Rising Fork Use and the Decreasing Likelihood That Appraisers Will Bother to Notice Them

Drinking glasses present another interesting case. Overall, about 20 percent of Kent County inventories list them, with a high of 43 percent among wealthy households in the 1790s; in the 1750s, not one of the 36 inventories for households worth less than £50 lists a drinking glass. Archaeologically, however, they are quite common. Stemmed glasses, the easiest kind to identify from small fragments, have been found at all four of the sites excavated by the author and his colleagues, including the home of poor tenants at Augustine Creek North. The remains of at least five stemmed glasses were found in one well at the John Powell Site, the home of a middling property owner; the well was filled in about 1720 (Grettler et al. 1995). There are also some clear conflicts between inventories and archaeology. William Strickland's inventory lists no glasses or glassware, but at least three stemmed glasses and one tumbler, as well as a glass candlestick, were found at his farm. Similarly, no glasswares are listed in Charles Robinson's inventory, but archaeologists recovered fragments of glass tumblers and an opaque glass bowl from that site. The values inventory takers assigned to stemmed glasses and tumblers varied widely, presumably depending on quality and condition, but glasses were on average slightly more expensive than earthenware pans. They were highly breakable, and it is possible that all of William Strickland's and Charles Robinson's glass vessels had been dropped and the fragments swept away before

these men died—but this may be too much of an interpretative stretch.

c. *Bones*

Archaeology agrees with inventories on the distribution of large farm animals (Walsh 1992). Cattle and pig bones have been found in quantities on all of the eighteenth-century sites excavated in Delaware to date, and these animals are listed in most of the inventories. Where calculations are available, cattle seem to supply somewhat more meat than pigs, although cattle bones are larger and survive better, which may bias the sample. Sheep are common, but not as common as cattle or pig, and their distribution is more varied; some farmers raised and ate much more sheep than others. A discrepancy between inventories and archaeology appears when we move on to smaller animals. No inventory in the Delaware sample specifically lists chickens, although a very few list unspecified "fowles." Chicken bones, however, have been found on all sites excavated to date. William Strickland's inventory lists no chicken or other "fowles," but archaeologists found 324 "medium bird" bones that were almost certainly chicken. Thomas Dawson's inventory also lists no birds. Fishing gear is listed in a very small number of Delaware inventories, but the bones of fish that were probably taken from local streams with a line and hook have been found on all of these sites.

Not one inventory in the Delaware sample lists a dog or a cat. Although both animals breed prolifically and can still usually be acquired for free, a good hunting dog must have been worth something, and perhaps a good mouser as well. (According to the folk tale, Dick Whittington paid a penny for his famous cat, and Frances Ballendine of Dumfries, Virginia, paid a shilling for a cat in 1774 [Crane et al. 1999:167].) Dogs and cats were certainly common in eighteenth-century Delaware, and their bones have been found on all sites that yielded large collections of animal bones. Dog and cat bones are found not because these animals were eaten, but because when they died their carcasses were thrown away with the rest of the trash; there is not much archaeological evidence of pet sentimentality in eighteenth-century rural America.

3. *Conclusions*

A comparison of probate inventories and archaeological findings shows that neither source by itself gives a complete picture of material life in the eighteenth century. Inventories tell us about many items that never survive on archaeological sites. We find detailed descriptions of clothing, lists of books by title, and economic valuations that tell how much things cost. We should not, however, overemphasize the value of inventories. They are not complete listings of household goods. Archaeology shows that they are not reliable guides to the presence of several inexpensive possessions, especially earthenware, but also tobacco pipes, sewing equipment, chickens, fishing gear, and drinking glasses. Carr and Walsh (1994:138) found that no more than 46 percent of Chesapeake households worth between £95 and £225 owned chamber pots, but as Table 17 shows, these vessels have been identified at all but two of the eighteenth-century archaeological sites that have been excavated in Delaware (and the ceramics from one of the two sites where they were not identified were highly fragmentary). Their absence from inventories is not a product of their distribution, but of the process by which the inventories were made. Extending this finding to perishable items, we believe that historians should never take seriously the omission from an inventory of an item worth less than about two shillings. Some historians have made much of very inexpensive objects, including brooms, mousetraps, wash basins, and scrub brushes (Carr and Walsh 1994:133; Main 1988:129). For those items that survive in the ground, such as ceramics, archaeology is slowly building up a data set large enough to tell us something about eighteenth-century standards of living. For items that decay, we probably must simply accept that we do not know much and most likely never will.