

Conclusions

Research Conclusions

The Limitations encountered in the completion of the research have been mentioned in the Research Design chapter, and they must be considered again here in order to evaluate the results of the archaeology at the Riseing Son Tavern. The limitation on the amount of area excavated prevented the discovery of the complete layout of the outbuildings, fences, and other service facilities, although these were partially revealed. For reasons detailed in the discussion of the research design there is some question about how much additional data remained undisturbed in any case. Enough information was recovered, however, to give at least tentative conclusions about the relationship between the facilities present and the use of the lot, which was the subject of the first research hypothesis. The foundations for two outbuildings were partially revealed. The "Upper Foundation" had a north-south dimension of twenty feet, and possessed no cellar. It may have functioned as a kitchen, or stable. The "Lower Foundation" was thirty-two feet from north to south and was dug into the bank on its north side. This was a typical construction arrangement for a barn, allowing access at two different grade levels (Bidwell and Falconer 1941:123; Glassie 1986:416) and Lemon notes that they became particularly common in southeastern Pennsylvania after the American Revolution (Lemon 1972:177). It is logical to conclude that this is the foundation for the stone barn mentioned in the 1816 Tax Assessment workbook and the narrower foundation to the north ("Upper Foundation") may be the stable mentioned in the same document. One or the other of these may be for the "Stone Barn" mentioned in the 1803 Assessment. Nothing was found in the builder's trench at either foundation to positively date the construction of the buildings, and only one of the two plan dimensions is available, but it is reasonable to assume that the two outbuildings represent service facilities for the Tavern by early in the nineteenth century, judging from the materials in the adjacent midden deposits. Peter Springer had purchased a little more than four and a half acres from James Stroud in 1793, and this tract is clearly too small to support a viable farm (see Lemon 1972:90-91) so the presence of a stable and barn on the lot in 1816 implies that they were serving other functions, related to the Tavern, and that the first hypothesis is validated.

The character of the distributions of functionally and economically significant artifact classes has been discussed in considerable detail in the previous chapter. We should state here that the lack of success in identifying distinctive artifact patterning for different kinds of sites does not imply that such patterning does not exist, but rather that we have not yet identified the critical variables. The fact that vessel shape and function attributes could not be consistently identified on the ceramic samples from the midden deposits restricted the use of analytical tools such as Miller's "CC Index". This might have provided more precise characterization of the cost valuation of some ceramic elements of the assemblage, which, in turn might have lead to a more successful outcome in the exploration of the second hypothesis. The fact that some of the assemblages available for comparison were not from general midden deposits, but rather from sealed privy contexts may have affected the

comparisons also. At the same time, the lack of clear results from the methods of analysis and comparison applied here provides an impetus to refine our ability to deal with assemblages where these limitations are present, since they do in fact represent the majority of assemblages encountered in the field, particularly during survey activities. New techniques are obviously needed to deal with these problems.

The comparison of the assemblage from the Riseing Son Tavern with those reported by Rockman and Rothschild appeared to yield a result consistent with their original analysis, but the elements of the assemblage chosen for comparison would not have distinguished their tavern contexts from other kinds of site functions, if all the contexts had been from the nineteenth century. We must conclude that the analysis is of marginal utility in the latter time frame, since it would be necessary to know from indendent information that a Tavern was present, and it would be likely that the setting of such a context (urban vs. rural) would also be known in advance, so the analysis would not yield new information, though it does pinpoint a consistent relationship between implied behaviour and the archeological record.

The lack of consistent information on the geographic origin of materials present at the site is, once again, a function of the kinds of contexts recovered. It seems unlikely that this difficulty could be overcome with alternative methods of analysis, since the limitation is strictly one of sherd size, and does not appear to be addressable through other attributes. Even sophisticated methods of trace element analysis, such as those used on prehistoric sites (e.g. Doran and Hodson 1975), would yield information only on the origin of the containers (if that), rather than on the commodities within them.

Research Prospects

The research at the Riseing Son Tavern has allowed the examination of certain analytical problems with regard to artifact distributions, and if the desired results were not obtained, then at least we can examine some possible future research that might overcome the limitations encountered here. If the breakdown of South's Artifact Groups does not yield clearcut distinctions between sites of different functions, it seems likely that the fact that it is being applied to sites that are not "eighteenth-century British colonial sites" (South 1977:120) is a contributing factor. There is nothing wrong with examining the possibility that the Carolina Pattern might be a valuable reference point, even for nineteenth century Federal period sites, but it should not be too surprising if the comparison doesn't work well. It does seem likely that "the by-product of a specified activity has a consistent frequency relationship to that of all other activities . . ." (South 1977:122), though not necessarily ". . . in proportion to their organized integration" (Ibid). It seems likely that major artifact group breakdowns are not detecting the specific activity by-products that are peculiar to the different kinds of sites examined here¹, and that it will be necessary to examine the type constituents of the groups in more detail. As mentioned in the analysis chapter, the basic activities at Taverns are not necessarily different than those at domestic sites, so the intensification of some combination of common items may be sought. This is, in fact approach advocated by Rockman and Rothschild for detecting differences within Tavern sites as a group. Alternatively, some odd or marginal items, such as horse gear or wagon hardware might be the key, and future research projects can seek these "signatures".

In general terms, we are operating in an information rich environment and reorderings of the data based on careful conceptual models should generate better and better approximations of the artifact patterns that are of particular interest to current and future research problems. It seems likely that multi-variate statistical methods will ultimately be needed to manage the complex data sets from the industrial era. It should be remembered that no matter how powerful a statistical tool is, it is no better than the organization of the data set to which it is applied. Less complicated numerical comparisons can often lead to important insights about how the data sets should be partitioned and which measurements have the potential to yield results, and it is appropriate to continue the use of these methods in order provide a solid basis for the application of more powerful tools. It is likely that the application of statistical methods based on assumptions of normality would also provide helpful information. The problem of sample control is a serious one, and randomness is often not a reasonable assumption. On the other hand, many of the more familiar measures remain relatively robust even when the appropriate assumptions cannot be met, and measures of central tendency and variation may be useful in clarifying distributions of variables and identifying both those that are important and those that are spurious.

Archeological data sets could make important contributions to the clarification and interpretation of the more complex models of historical process advanced by scholars of economic history (i.e. Taylor and Ellsworth 1971). The relationship of material culture to other aspects of cultural behaviour becomes increasingly complex in the industrial era, and these data sets give us access to the activities and preferences of a wide variety of people who, by contrast to the pivotal political and economic figures, are only barely represented in the documentary record. Our ability to penetrate to the more intimate details of these lives gives us a better understanding of the economic as well as the other cultural values that in the aggregate make up the historical past. When our data sets fail to live up to our expectations it is probably because we haven't done them justice, rather than vice versa. We anticipate exploring these issues in future research projects in Delaware and elsewhere, armed with the conviction that we can learn new things about the past if we examine the evidence carefully.

Note: Conclusions

¹The fact that the Public House-Tailor Shop was readily detected as aberrant (South 1977:110-111) so that a specialized function could be sought, is likely to be a product of the fact that the unusual disproportion of the key artifacts (shot and clothing items) occurred within groups that were themselves commonly small proportions of the total assemblage. If the same numbers of artifacts had been added to the kitchen or architecture groups, the difference might not have been so obvious.