

Chapter 7

SYNTHESIS AND RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

A. EVALUATION OF RESEARCH DESIGN

At this time, the Boyd's Store and House site is the only crossroads store in Delaware to have been subjected to detailed historical and archaeological research. An overarching objective of the research for the current study was to place the site within the body of historical and archaeological research that has been undertaken on other store sites in northern and central Delaware. Despite limitations imposed by some types of data, this objective has been broadly achieved. A number of specific issues identified in the accepted proposal (Appendix E) could not in the end be addressed effectively, either because data was lacking, or because it could not be obtained within the reasonable work effort determined to be appropriate for the project.

After consideration of other options it was determined to undertake historical research on store licenses and associated imported goods valuations, and subsequently on the analysis of two informative and contrasting store inventories from the 1820s. This research has proved to be extremely rewarding, enabling many stores in St. George's Hundred to be located with varying degrees of precision, providing a wealth of comparative economic data on the stores, and even identifying gender issues in store ownership and scale. One striking result was the identification of Boyd's as one of a handful of truly rural stores in St. George's Hundred, where stores are an overwhelmingly nuclear town/village phenomenon.

The additional research undertaken into the architecture of the store buildings in St. George's Hundred and beyond has also proved to be a valuable contribution to regional material culture studies. As well

as purpose-built "stores" that really functioned as warehouses, there is some evident patterning in the architectural form and layout of the remaining stores, which is discussed below. Historical documentary research, as opposed to architectural analysis, did not contribute much to this study, chiefly because of the larger than anticipated volume of documentary material (such as Orphan's Court Records) to be reviewed for relatively small data return.

Archaeologically, the development of the dwelling and store buildings was documented, and an overall plan of that portion of the site within the Area of Potential Effect was produced. The APE constraint limited the extent to which the site could be compared to more extensively studied sites (in particular the Darrach Store, whose overall site plan shows structures and features with many similarities to those in the more limited study area at Boyd's Corner; see De Cunzo et al. 1992: Figure 26).

It had been hoped that intact stratigraphy would be located containing artifact patterning related to the use of the store. This had been the case at the Dickson Site but not at Darrach. At Boyd's it had initially been thought that the store was in one half of the building identified in the Phase 2 study, and that the basement might contain soils with this patterning. Neither of these proved to be the case, and in the areas outside the dwelling there was really no stratigraphy relating to occupation areas in and around the store. Some attempt has been made to distinguish store artifacts from purely domestic ones at the site, but the results are not compelling (see below).

B. SUMMARY OF HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BOYD'S STORE AND HOUSE SITE

This location was clearly used by Native Americans for a range of activities. The discovery of artifacts here may be connected to the presence of a probable springhead of a tributary of the Augustine Creek on the east side of U.S. Route 13 and currently (2011) behind the Wawa store. This tributary has been largely obliterated by commercial development and the Delaware Route 1 ramps. The absence of features or secure contexts for these artifacts renders further evaluation difficult.

The Boyd's home, store and farmstead appear to have been placed onto an earlier historic landscape (Figure 7.1). As discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, until sometime before 1759 the Appoquinimink Road, the predecessor of the present U.S. Route 13, ran some distance to the west of its present alignment. Although certainty is not possible it may be that Phase 1, Context 209, the north-south dry-laid stone linear wall foundation of cobbles truncated at the north by the first Boyd house foundation, reflects either the location of the east side of the former road or a boundary line related to it.

Phase 2, the first part of the Boyd ownership up to about 1837 or a little later, saw the erection of a post-in-ground store. This physically free-standing building was perhaps less than 300 square feet (Figure 7.1). A short distance to the north-northwest was a dwelling house that appears to have been of frame, but which was not fully explored since only a portion lay within the APE. Various rear/side yard features included a barrel privy and at least one post-in-ground structure.

Phase 3, broadly belonging to the middle and later 19th century but with most of the major building work probably dating to before the end of the Boyd ownership in 1877, saw the erection of a new house and a rebuilding of the store (Figure 7.2). The two were

conjoined, creating the common house/store configuration typically seen in urban centers, rather than the separate structures of Phase 2. A new well was dug in the rear/side yard, fed by a brick drain that ran under the store building from the east. At least one post-in-ground building in the rear/side yard was replaced in the same manner as the store using stone and mortar footings supporting sill beams (see below).

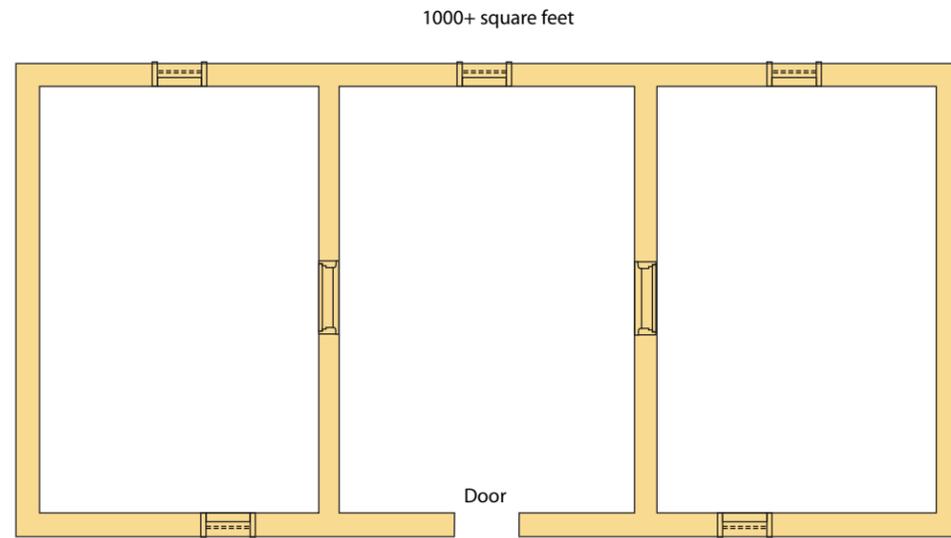
In Phase 4, the earlier 20th century, concrete and brick footings were laid for a full-width porch across the eastern front of the dwelling, replacing a Phase 3 stoop. Also, additions were placed in the angle between the Phase 2 house and the Phase 3 dwelling, showing that the former was still in use at this time. The additions appear to cover the approach to the cellar bulkhead. A few yard features appear to date to this period.

Phase 5 represents the demolition and removal of the house and infilling of the basement and some grading and filling of the site.

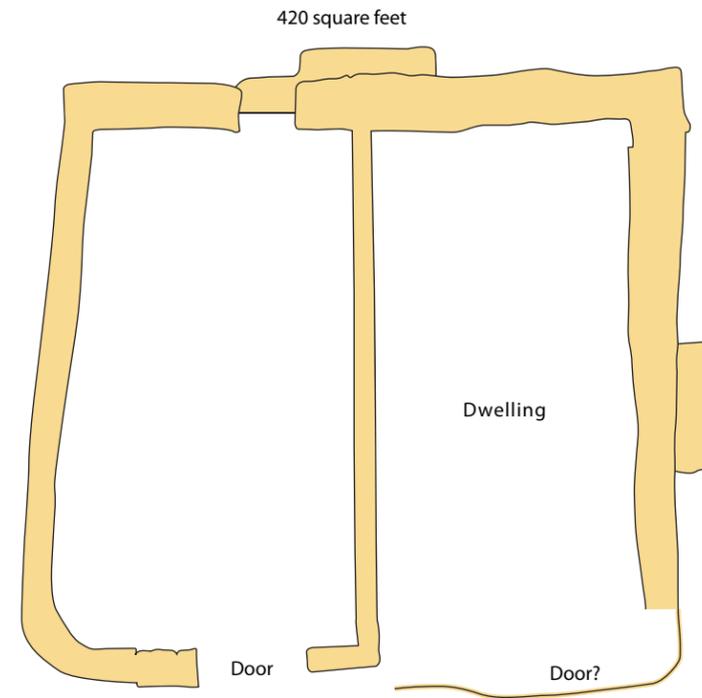
C. SOME STORE BUILDINGS IN NORTHERN DELAWARE AND EASTERN SHORE MARYLAND

In Chapter 6 the above-ground architectural expression of four surviving examples of stores in St. George's Hundred was identified and discussed (Table 6.5). All four are in urban or urbanizing settings in Odessa, Middletown or Port Penn. As noted, three of the four examples are substantial two-story brick stores with attached dwellings, and two at least were built using Federal architectural design elements. The free-standing, frame Tatman Office in Odessa perhaps reflects a different tradition in its separation of commercial from domestic functions and its more vernacular construction.

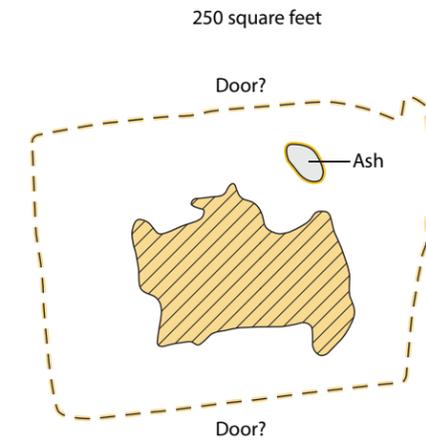
A. The Brick Store, Smyrna, Blackbird Hundred, New Castle County: 1767
(Source: Historic American Building Survey)



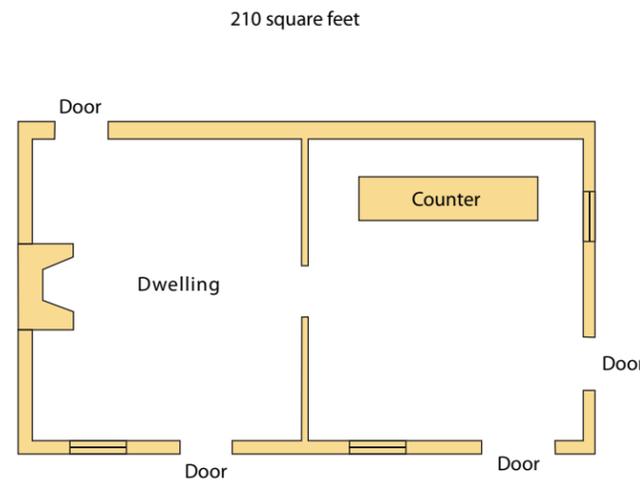
C. The Darrach House and Store, Duck Creek Hundred, Kent County: 1778-1805
(Source: De Cunzo et al. 1992, Figure 27)



E. The Dickinson Store, White Clay Creek Hundred New Castle County: 1780 to 1845.
(Source: Catts, Hodny and Custer 1989, Figure 34)



B. The Spenser Store, Chesterville, Kent County, Maryland: Late 18th century
(Source: De Cunzo et al. 1992, Figure 95)



D. Boyd's Corner, St. George Hundred, New Castle County: Phase 2 (1812-1837) Phase 3 (1837+)

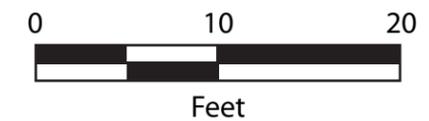
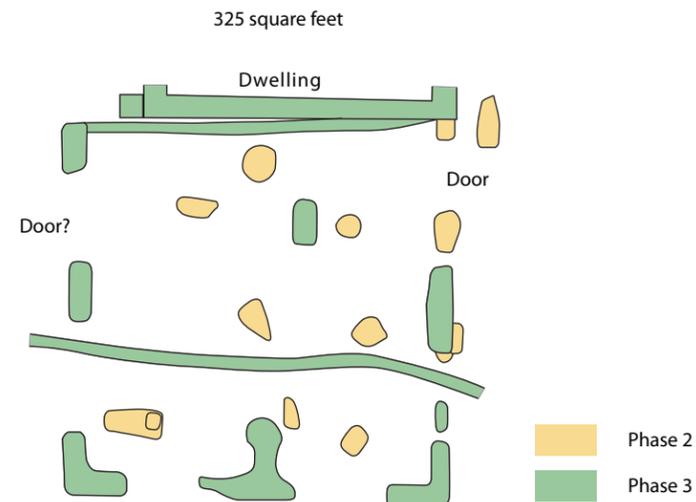


Figure 7.3. Comparative Ground Plans of Stores. A) The Brick Store, Smyrna, Blackbird Hundred, New Castle County: 1767 (Source: Historic American Building Survey). B) The Spenser Store, Chesterville, Kent County, Maryland: Late 18th century. (Source: De Cunzo et al. 1992: Figure 95). C) The Darrach House and Store, Duck Creek Hundred, Kent County: 1778-1805 (Source: De Cunzo et al. 1992: Figure 27). D) Boyd's Corner, St George Hundred, New Castle County: Phase 2 (1812-1837) Phase 3 (1837+). E) The Dickson Store, White Clay Creek Hundred, New Castle County: 1780 to 1845. (Source: Catts, Hodny and Custer 1989: Figure 34).

Figure 7.3 draws together, at a common scale, the ground plans of four northern Delaware stores and one from the adjacent portion of Maryland. These date from 1767 through the mid-19th century and show a variety of size and layout. Brick Store near Smyrna, documented by the Historic American Building Survey and discussed in the study of the Darrach Store (De Cunzo et al. 1992:295), stands out because of its size and function as a warehouse rather than as a retail store. This is actually a three-story building with close to 3,000 square feet of floor space in total.

The four remaining stores have floor spaces ranging from 210 square feet at the Spenser Store in Maryland (De Cunzo et al. 1992:296-301) to 420 Square feet at the Darrach Store in Kent County (De Cunzo et al. 1992). The Phase 3 Boyd's store is close to the median at 325 square feet. The Phase 2 store may have been somewhat smaller. The free-standing Dickson Store had roughly 250 square feet of floor area (Catts, Hodny and Custer 1989:109-218 [especially 203-213]).

Both free-standing and combined store/dwellings are represented in the small sample. The Darrach House and Store is the most "urban" in its reconstructed form. Although not in a true urban setting (De Cunzo et al. 1992:Figure 91), it lay on the outskirts of Smyrna on the main route to landings on Duck Creek. The Spenser Store is at a 'corner': the intersection of important east-west and north-south routes, similar to the Boyd's site (De Cunzo et al. 1992:296). The Dickson Store is in another edge-of-town location, in this case on the outskirts of Christiana overlooking landings on the Christina River.

The Boyd's Site appears to show a change from the free-standing store to the attached store and dwelling model. Although the archaeological evidence is fragmentary, when combined with the evidence from the Rea and Price map (Figure 3.1) it appears that the

Phase 2 house and store were separate structures, possibly as late as 1849. With the construction of the new dwelling during Phase 3 the store itself was largely rebuilt with its northern wall against the south gable of the house. It appears likely that the new house was positioned specifically to adjoin the existing Phase 2 store which was then rebuilt at the same location.

Some idea of the interior layout of the stores has been gained at the Spenser and Dickson sites. Spenser appears to have been an unheated space with a counter at the rear of the store and shelves around all the walls. The much more fragmentary data from Dickson did allow for a tentative reconstruction showing a free-standing central stove connected by an overhead flue to a chimney behind a counter in one gable wall. A ten-plate stove had been installed here by 1795 (Catts, Hodny and Custer 1989: 206, Figure 47).

The data from Boyd's is even less informative, but some suggestions can be made. It appears likely that the main entrance to the store at both phases was at the northern end of the eastern wall, adjacent to the southeast corner of the dwelling in Phase 3. There are substantial posts here at both phases. There may also have been a rear door in the same location on the rear wall, but this is much less certain. The complex, two-phase, stone-and-mortar settings at the center of the south wall may represent a stove or, less probably, a fireplace.

In construction techniques, the Boyd's site is unusual. The Phase 2 building was a post-in-ground structure broadly falling in the Chesapeake Bay tradition. It has been argued that this building technique was adopted as a low-cost, short-term strategy in the colonial Chesapeake where the majority of the resources were directed toward tobacco production that exhausted the soil and therefore made the construction of long-lasting structures uneconomic (Deetz 1977:32-33, citing Carson et al. 1988). This seems unlikely to be the motivation here, but there may have been some calcu-

lation involved in the use of the technique. Whatever it was, it is clear that the posts began to rot out and fail after a time and were overlain and replaced by the stone-and-mortar settings of Phase 3, which are interpreted as support structures either for vertical piers or, considered more probable, sill beams for a frame superstructure. The evidence from the Dickson Store, where stone piers were used, adopted the latter interpretation (Catts, Hodny and Custer 1989:205)

D. STORE ARTIFACTS AT THE BOYD'S STORE AND HOUSE SITE

Unlike the Dickson store, but similar to the Darrach house and store, there was no immediately apparent patterning in the artifact data to identify items that might be from the Boyd store. The Phase II investigations recovered an apparently unused marble and a similarly pristine gunflint, both of which might have been misplaced store items, but these are individual items whose loss could have been the result of other events and processes at the site. A predicted high incidence of coins, reflecting the commercial transactions at the store, was not borne out by the artifact analysis. In fact only three coins were recovered. Hopes of finding abandoned "caches" of store materials were also not realized in the investigations.

Despite the small percentage of the value of the store goods they represent (see below), ceramics were felt to hold the greatest potential for distinguishing between domestic materials and those from the store. It was predicted that any ceramics broken in the store before sale and then discarded on site would be distinguishable from household items by their lack of use-wear. Flatware, particularly plates, were held to have the greatest potential in this respect because plates from late 18th- and early 19th-century sites typically show numerous knife marks on the upper surface and abrasions and wear on their footrings or flat bases. Rims were predicted to show damage from repeated

stacking if they were domestic items. It was therefore predicted that sherds that did not have these features were essentially new or at least completely unused at the time of breakage and might therefore be part of the store inventory.

The ceramics from Excavation Unit 23, which occupies the bulk of the area of the store, were examined for these characteristics. Rim and base sherds larger than one-inch in smallest dimension were used. A total of 14 sherds from eight vessels (4 plates, 2 teabowls, one teacup and one crock) were considered to exhibit pristine characteristics. Redware (2 vessels), creamware (2 vessels), pearlware (1 vessel), and Chinese porcelain (3 vessels) were represented.

It is not possible to draw any broad conclusions from this rather limited data. The small number of identified sherds is less than 1% of the total ceramics from Excavation Unit 23 and may suggest that losses from store inventories through breakage were quite minimal and that some store sites may therefore not be very productive archaeologically. Against that may be set the evidence from the Dickson store, where the researchers felt that the artifact assemblage was indeed store-related. It would be instructive to undertake a comparative wear analysis of the ceramics from the Dickson store to see if indeed they do show a preponderance of unworn vessels.

E. STORE INVENTORIES AND ARCHAEOLOGY

The wealth of detail in the 1821 Robert Gordon and 1828 William Dickson store inventories (Appendix D) was so striking that its application to archaeological and material culture research was attempted as part of this study.

These inventories provide a snapshot of the kind of goods that a retailer presumably assumed could be sold within the catchment area of the store in question. They therefore reflect the needs and aspirations of the community served by the store, although they may also to an unknown extent embed the role of the storekeeper as an agent of cultural change (De Cunzo 2004).

The Robert Gordon inventory (Appendix D.1), the less massive of the two, was analyzed and interrogated for the light it could throw on the quantity and value of store goods that might reasonably be expected to survive archaeologically in the environmental conditions of northern Delaware. These goods include all ceramic, metal and glass items, and other durable materials such as bone or shell for buttons and other items. The analysis was chiefly confined to the store items and did not include the household inventory except as a monetary comparison with the store inventory.

A series of archaeologically oriented questions was then posed of the data and these are presented in Table 7.1.

Store goods represented almost 50% of the value of Robert Gordon's estate. Roughly a third of his store goods by value were of foreign origin. As is normally seen in domestic and store inventories well into the 19th century, the single most important category of goods by value was cloth, clothing and related items. These amount to almost half of the value of the inventory. This is sobering when it is appreciated that cloth materials normally form only a tiny percentage of archaeological materials recovered from contemporary sites, and are frequently entirely absent. Perishable goods like foodstuffs and largely perishable wooden items make up another 31% by value.

Of the ten most valuable individual items, only the tenth, an estimated "lot" of earthenware, is likely to be observable archaeologically. Rum, wine, sugar

and molasses (ranking second through 5th in value) together make up over 7% of the inventory. Top ranked is the enigmatic almost 50 pounds of "young byson" (perhaps salted meat?), worth \$42.74. Bolts of cloth and an illegible entry (perhaps tea, from its location in the list) make up the remainder of the ten most valuable items.

By contrast, the value of items that might be anticipated to have some archaeological expression on sites in Delaware amount to just under 20% of the total. In other words, we may perhaps expect to have the opportunity to study archaeologically about one fifth of a household's possessions by value.

Ceramics, justifiably the focus of so much archaeological attention for reasons unrelated to value, amount to only just over two percent of the value of goods in the store. When earthenwares, sold by the "lot", are excluded, the value drops to less than one percent. Glass tablewares in the store inventory are valued at twice the non-earthenware ceramics, but are still less than 2% of the inventory by value. Among the ceramics are three "Setts lillipution Ware": probably child's toy tea sets (referring of course to the tiny people of Lilliput in Defoe's *Gulliver's Travels*). Children are also catered for by a number of schoolbooks.

Metal tools and hardware, which also stand a good chance of archaeological survival, amount to about 5.25% by value. Apart from some rakes, which may not be made of metal, little of this material has an agricultural orientation. A considerable number of these items may be locks.

The immense David Wilson sale inventory (Table 7.2 and Appendix D.2), almost 10 times the size of the Gordon document, contains 1,184 lots from the store and farmstead (the household materials, an additionally massive tally, were not transcribed for this study). Division between the store and farmstead items is not always readily discernible in the document and so a

truly direct comparison with the Gordon inventory cannot be made. Gordon was a storekeeper and small farmer, while Wilson was a merchant whose business interests also included trading in commodities and land speculation. Nevertheless, some interesting observations are possible. Imported goods amounted to about 10% of the Wilson inventory by value, a much lower percentage than the Gordon store.

Of the ten most valuable items in the Wilson inventory, grains (wheat, oats and corn) occupy first, fourth, eighth and tenth rankings, making up almost one-third of the total value of the inventory. Wilson was certainly trading in grains, and so an unknown portion of this value is store or warehouse goods, but some is probably also from his own farm operations. Spokes, presumably finished products from a spoke mill that could be sold to wheelwrights, make up another 16% of the inventory by value. Timber (planks) make up a further 10%. In all, the top 10 items account for about 71% of the total value. None, except possibly the 668 "bundles blades" valued at \$534.40 (5.5% of inventory) are likely to have an archaeological signature.

In the Wilson inventory potentially archaeologically surviving items are down to 5.36 % by value (compared to about 20% at the Gordon store). If the grains are removed from the Wilson total, the percentage of "archaeological" items rises to 8.6% by value, still substantially below the Gordon numbers.

Ceramics are a correspondingly low percentage (just over 4%; 6% with the grains excluded), with a minimum of 326 vessels recorded. This is higher than the Gordon store. Glass tablewares are however a tiny percentage here: 95 items amounting to only \$6.48 of the inventory. Even cloth and clothing, usually so prominent, amount to only 7.8%/11.9% of the value, although this is still 1.5 times the dollar value of the Gordon store's cloth and clothing.

While it is clear that these two inventories represent very different kinds and scale of store operations, generally persistent patterns can be observed. Primarily that ceramics formed a small percentage of household expenditure to judge by the value of the inventories of these two stores. Overall, items that might be expected to survive archaeologically amount to no more than 20% of the total value of the Gordon inventory, and less than half that in the Wilson valuation. By this measure, it is perhaps then a confirmation of the findings from the Boyd's site that artifacts diagnostic of store operations do not readily stand out.