

## Chapter 8

### LIFE ON THE FARM: THE TESTIMONY OF THE ARTIFACTS

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#### A. INTRODUCTION

The investigations of the mill site produced very few artifacts and none that throw light on the processes taking place or the life of the people who worked there. By contrast, the farmsite produced a large quantity of artifacts, most of them directly related to the people who lived there in the late 18th through the early 20th centuries.

A total of 5,577 artifacts from the 19th and 20th centuries were recovered from the Phase III archaeological investigations at the Springer/Little Farmstead. Over half of the artifacts (56.5%) are comprised of historic ceramics, the majority of which are redware. Table 8.1 shows a detailed account of the ceramics broken down by type, date, number, and percentage. Ceramics are normally the most prolific artifact type recovered from historic archaeological sites because of their durability, low cost, and the frequency with which they get broken and replaced.

Building materials, primarily nails and window glass with a sampling of mortar and brick, comprised almost one quarter (23%) of the total assemblage. The remaining one-fifth of the artifacts consisted of glass vessels (8%), faunal remains (4%), tools/hardware (2%), personal and recreational items such as tobacco pipes, beads, marbles, and keys (1.5%), clothing related items (1%), furnishings (1%), horseshoes/harness parts (.25%), other artifacts (.75%), and indeterminate items (2%). The “other artifacts” group was comprised of ten pieces of cutlery, six coins, five kitchen items, three shot-

gun shell fragments, one spark plug, one coal fragment, and one whetstone fragment. A complete artifact inventory can be found in Appendix A3.

#### B. THE EARLY PIT BENEATH THE OUTBUILDING

A total of 797 artifacts was recovered from the burnt pit feature found in Excavation Units 104 through 108, 82 through 84, and 119 (Plates 8.1, 8.2). This accounts for 14% of the total artifact assemblage. Many of these datable artifacts help to support the theory that this pit feature is the remains of the cellar hole associated with the log house documented in the 1822 Mill Creek Hundred tax assessment. As many as 454 ceramic sherds were recovered from the pit (Plate 8.1). The majority of these sherds were whiteware (175), redware (103), pearlware (88), ironstone (65), creamware (23), and smaller amounts of porcelain, buff bodied slipware (*circa* 1670-1795), and refined redwares. The refined redwares consisted of four sherds of copper luster (*circa* 1740-1850) and two sherds of engine-turned hollowware (*circa* 1763-1820). In general terms, these wares suggest a cutoff date of about 1850 for the assemblage, with most of the material belonging in the first half of the 19th century. This pattern suggests that the material found represents the household materials of the Springers. The inventory and sale of Isaac Springer’s possessions in 1849 brings home the modest circumstances of a small Delaware farmer of the period, but these artifacts suggest a degree of participation in the wider world that we might not otherwise expect (Plate 8.2).

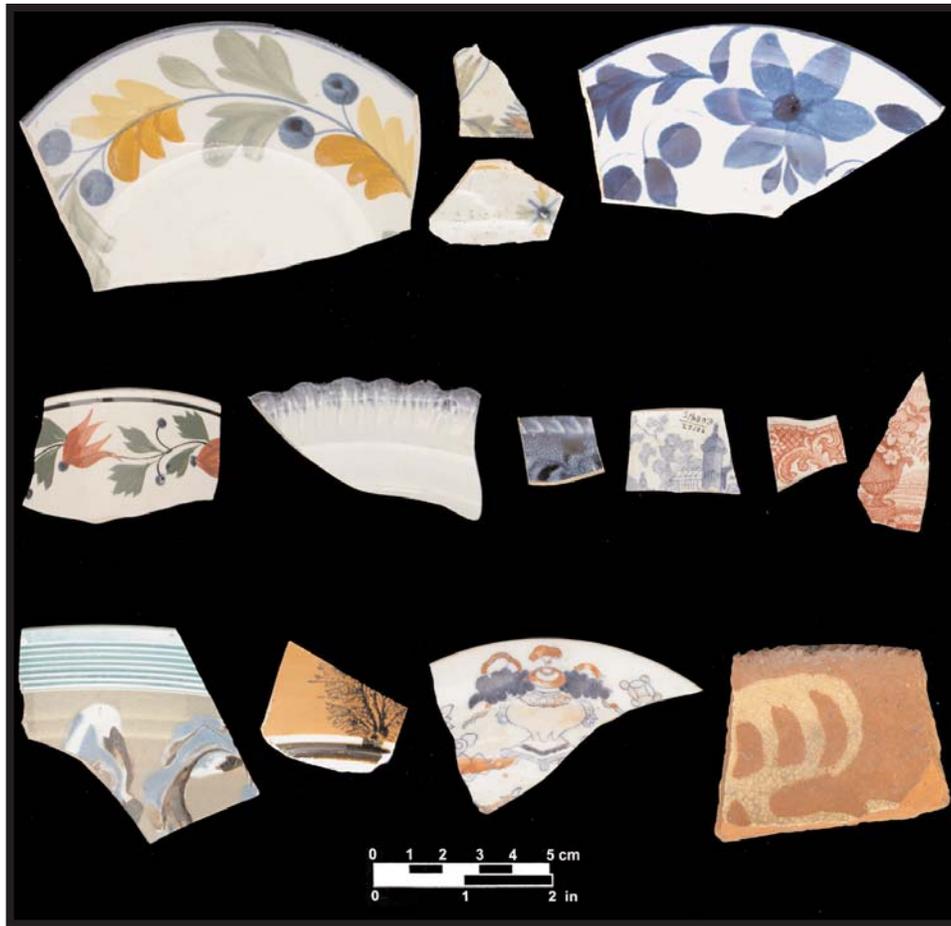


Plate 8.1. Ceramics from the pit beneath the outbuilding in the western part of the site, probably the infilled cellar pit of the house lived in by Isaac Springer until his death in 1849. Top row, left to right, a whiteware saucer decorated with an underglazed hand-painted polychrome “Guady Dutch” floral border by an unidentified member of the Wood family in Staffordshire, England c.1810-1830, two pearlware plate cavetto sherds with hand-painted polychrome floral decoration c.1787-1830, a whiteware saucer rim sherd with an underglazed hand-painted blue floral border.1815-1850. Middle row left to right, a whiteware saucer rim sherd with underglazed hand-painted, polychrome floral “sprig” decoration c.1815-1860, a whiteware plate rim sherd with molded hand-painted underglazed blue “shell edge” decoration c.1810-1830, a pearlware saucer rim sherd with underglazed dark blue transfer printed decoration, a whiteware tableware body sherd with an underglazed light blue transfer printed scenic decoration, two whiteware plate sherds with underglazed red transfer printed scenic decoration c.1825-1900+. Bottom row left to right, a whiteware bowl rim with an underglazed, variegated “wave and loop” decoration with a green-stained rilled rim c.1820-1860, a whiteware cup body sherd with “mocha” decoration c.1820-1860, a soft-paste porcelain small plate rim sherd with underglazed blue transfer printed decoration infilled over the glaze with hand-painted red pigment c.1820-1840, a redware pie plate, coggled rim sherd with white slip-trailed decoration (Photographer: Michael Murphy, February 2003) [HRI Neg. 02069 D1-02].



Plate 8.2. Miscellaneous artifacts from the pit beneath the outbuilding in the western part of the site, probably the infilled cellar pit of the house lived in by Isaac Springer until his death in 1849. Row one, left to right, three copper U.S. Large Cents dated 1837, 1797 & (1816-1857), a brass thimble with a Latin inscription “QUI ME NEGLIGE ME PERD” translated “He who neglects me loses me”, and a small brass child’s ring with a molded rope decoration. Row two, left to right, a Federal style molded glass drawer pull post 1825, glass decanter stopper c.1780-1800, an iron fork handle with bone side plates, an iron knife handle with bone side plates, and a pewter spoon bowl/handle fragment c.1770-1795. Row three, left to right, five white ball clay tobacco pipe stem and bowl fragments, a brass drawer pull 18th/19th century, and a circular brass pocket watch or clock part. Row four, left to right, five hand stamped brass flat disc-type coat buttons, three small bone shirt buttons and one mother of pearl shirt button (Photographer: Michael Murphy, February 2003) [HRI Neg. 02069 D1-03].

Table 8.1.  
Summary of Ceramic Types from the Springer/Little Farm

Ceramic Type (Date)	Number of Sherds	Percent
Redware	1175	37.25
Whiteware (1815-Present)	763	24.25
Pearlware (1775-1840)	455	14.5
Ironstone (1840-Present)	381	12.25
Creamware (1762-1820)	137	4.3
Porcelain	54	1.7
Earthenware (White Bodied)	41	1.3
Stoneware (1800-Present)	39	1.25
Red Bodied Slipware, Coarse (1670-1850)	30	0.95
Refined Redware (1763-1820)	23	0.65
Yellowware (1827-1940)	20	0.6
Buff Bodied Slipware (1670-1850)	19	0.55
Tin Enameled, Delft (1625-1800)	7	0.2
White Salt Glaze Stoneware (1720-1805)	5	0.15
Refined Red Bodied Slipware, Copper Luster (1740-1850)	4	0.1
Total	3153	100.00%

Three of the six coins found on site were recovered from the pit: a 1797 Liberty Head, an 1837 Liberty Head, and a Liberty Head in very poor condition with head facing left with bun, "Coronet Type," *circa* 1816 to 1857 (Yeoman 1981:73). Building materials such as nails and window glass accounted for 19% of the artifacts retained from this feature. These show that even though the Springer farmhouse was a log structure, it had some conveniences such as glass in the windows. A press-molded glass drawer-handle from a Federal style bureau of 1825 or later also was recovered, and this too suggests level of comfort perhaps not implied by the inventory and sale of 1849. Was this drawer handle from the bureau or tea table mentioned in the sale and inventory? A glass bottle-stopper known as a "Target" or "Bull's Eye" stopper, dated post 1780 also was recovered (Jones and Sullivan 1985:156).

Seventeen buttons of various materials were recovered along with one sleeve-link fragment. There were six brass and two copper loop shank buttons, one, one-hole bone button, and one four-hole shell button, most of which can be dated to after 1837 (Hume 1969:90). One brass button had the inscription "SCOVIL. . . TREBLE ORANGE" on the back. The Scovill Manufacturing Company has made buttons since 1802, but under different names. Scovill was not used in the firm's name until 1821 (Luscomb 1967:174). The term "Treble Orange" referred to the gold coating (gilt) on the brass button and was used to play up the color because this style of button lacked decoration or unusual shapes (Luscomb 1967:79). The seven remaining buttons were made of plastic and do not fit in with the earlier artifacts found in the pit feature. Due to their small size, it is possible that they reached this lower strata through root disturbance. A brass thimble was found with the medieval Latin inscription "QUI ME NEGLIGE ME PERD," which translates "Who neglects me loses me." Well, somebody did lose it.

The faunal assemblage from the pit consisted of 59 osteological specimens which included ten eggshell fragments, seven avian bone fragments, four freshwater clam fragments, four oyster shell fragments, three fish scales, two cow bone fragments, two turtle shell fragments, one ocean shell (Olividae), and 26 unidentified mammal bone fragments. These numbers are too small to provide precise answers to questions of diet and subsistence, but it would appear that they did not rely solely on domestic species. How the ocean shell came to be in the pit feature is a mystery. This shell is generally found in the sand on the southeast coast of the United States (Abbott 1962:89). Other artifacts found in the pit included 46 curved glass fragments, 14 tobacco pipe fragments, seven curved iron fragments, two wood handles (cutlery), one pewter spoon, and one whetstone fragment.

### C. THE OUTBUILDING AND THE AREA TO THE EAST

A builders' trench was excavated on the west side of the outbuilding wall (Context 913; Excavation Unit 106). This part of the outbuilding was built on top of the filled burnt pit feature. The artifacts recovered from this trench consisted of four cut nails, six ceramic sherds (whiteware and ironstone), eight canning jar fragments, four iron hardware fragments, one red clay bead, and one indeterminate porcelain fragment with metal casing. One of the canning jar fragments was embossed with the patent date of July 14, 1908. This may suggest a late date for the outbuildings, although artifacts can get trampled into the upper portions of features like builders' trenches.

Almost 25% of the total artifact assemblage was found in three excavation units (EU numbers 113, 114, and 115) located to the southeast of the eastern

outbuilding wall [916]. The Phase II studies had strongly indicated that material and soils in this area were derived from deposits to the west that had been moved here when the bank barns was constructed. The evidence from these units supports this hypothesis. Evidence from these units further supports the idea that the earlier domestic focus of the site was in the area of the later outbuilding and barn and that this is probably the Springer farmstead. The barn and outbuilding are therefore very probably the construction of James Ward of William Little.

The top humic layer [Context 1] of these units contained artifacts dating post 1840. Context 2, a fill layer of material probably brought from the west, contained a wide range of artifacts with a terminus *post quem* of 1775. The artifacts dating earlier could be associated with the log house, and the artifacts found on the top fill layers, dating later, could be associated with the Ward/Little House.

#### **D. THE WELL BY THE OUTBUILDING**

Artifacts recovered from the well by the outbuilding consisted of beverage and milk bottles, large sherds of ironstone and porcelain, a 1929 Lincoln Head wheat cent, a glazed ceramic door knob, cutlery, tools, and a brass plate. Overall, they suggest that the well was filled in the second quarter of the 20th century, the fill materials including artifacts from the Little and subsequent Maclary and Bernhard periods.

The beverage bottle was an Orange Crush bottle with a patent date July 20, 1920. The milk bottles (*circa* 1940) were from Clover, Delamore, and Diamond State Dairies, all of which are located in Wilmington, Delaware. Most of the ironstone tableware had partial maker's marks and can be dated post 1840. The cutlery found in the well consisted of a large serving fork, a butter knife, and a

spoon, all silver plated. Two corroded hammer heads were found, one claw and the other lathing. The most interesting artifact was a brass plate showing men putting safes in a test furnace with a sail and mast in the background (Plate 8.3). Around this scene is the inscription "150 WALNUT St PHILa," "HERRING'S Pt," "FARREL, HERRING & CO.," "MAY 13, 1852." Two fish, with eye holes for mounting, are located on either side of the plate. Farrel and Herring Co., located in Philadelphia, was a well known manufacturer of safes.



Plate 8.3. Brass safe plate, after 1852, from a mixed deposit in the well by the outbuilding at the Ward/Little Farm. It shows safes being tested in a furnace (Photographer: Michael Murphy, February 2003) [HRI Neg. 02069 D1-01].