

The Ordinary and the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Delaware

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ABSTRACT

The author and his colleagues have recently carried out excavations at three eighteenth-century farm sites in central Delaware. The Augustine Creek South and Thomas Dawson Sites were both occupied by ordinary property owners in the 1730 to 1770 period. The Augustine Creek North Site was occupied from about 1750 to 1810 by unknown but probably poor tenants, possibly in two chronologically separate occupations. At all three sites, architectural remains and artifact deposits were found. Analysis of these sites has focused on the question of how fully ordinary and poor people participated in the social, economic, and intellectual changes of the eighteenth century. The answer seems to be that they did embrace some changes, such as tea drinking, but rejected others, such as the reorganization of farms and the separation of public and private space.

INTRODUCTION

Despite our concern for learning about the history of ordinary people, many of the Big Ideas historians have about the eighteenth-century still seem to pertain predominantly to the world of the wealthy. Consider, for example, the “Georgian Mindset” and the “consumer revolution.” Historians such as James Deetz (1977) and Henry Glassie (1975) find it deeply

important that European Americans moved out of their old, vernacular houses and into new ones with balanced, Georgian plans, and they relate this change to a complete re-ordering of society. But millions of Americans lived in log cabins and tar-paper shacks until well into this century; what was their mindset? If moving into a Georgian house implies a shift from medieval to modern ways of thinking, did the poor miss out on the Renaissance? Eighteenth-century changes in purchasing behavior have also been singled out, by Cary Carson (1994) and Timothy Breen (1988) among others, as indicating a profound change in western society and its values. If we are now defined largely by what we buy, they say, this consumer identity can be traced to the century before the Revolution. The tea ceremony and its equipage are perhaps the best-known symbols of this new consumerism. Paul Shackel (1993) and Mark Leone (1988) relate these same changes in consumption to the rise of capitalism and the establishment of modern norms of social order. Again we can ask, if modern people are primarily consumers, how many people in the eighteenth-century were modern? If we are to understand the eighteenth-century changes that so many experts believe led to the creation of the modern world, we must search for paradigms that apply to the whole society, not just small parts of it.

To help us recover the lives of ordinary people from past centuries we have two main aides, written records and material objects. For ordinary people, material objects generally means things recovered through archaeology. Standing houses from the eighteenth-century have been much analyzed, but archaeology and some records (such as the federal direct tax of 1798) suggest that even the poorest standing houses are nicer than what was normal during the period (Chappell 1994). The average house is accessible to us only through archaeology. Likewise, the ceramics and furniture surviving in museums, even the pieces that are judged

“simple” or “folk,” also belonged overwhelmingly to the better-off. Because the belongings of the poor are unlikely to survive above the ground, archaeology can provide a uniquely democratic perspective on the past.

The excavations at the Augustine Creek North, Augustine Creek South, and Thomas Dawson Sites provide a wealth of data on the lives of ordinary Delaware farmers (Figure 1). These excavations were carried out in 1996 to 1998 by the author and his colleagues at Louis Berger & Associates, on behalf of the Delaware Department of Transportation. Together, these three sites provide a large amount of information on the material world of ordinary rural people in Delaware in the 1740 to 1780 period.

THE THOMAS DAWSON SITE

The Thomas Dawson Site was located just south of Dover, Delaware, next to modern U.S. Highway 13 (Bedell et al. 1999). Part of the site had been destroyed during construction of that highway in the 1950s. The site had been plowed, and in the early twentieth century a horse farm had been built just to the south of the site; in the 1940s a brick house was built just to the north. The brick house was torn down in 1988 using heavy machinery, and photographs taken at the time show the site as bare earth crisscrossed with caterpillar tread tracks. Despite these disturbances, important evidence of the Colonial farm did survive. Most of a cellar measuring 11.8 by 13.6 feet, probably part of the Dawsons’ house, was found, as well as several amorphous pits containing rich archaeological deposits (Figure 2). No evidence of outbuildings or fences survived, or anything else to indicate how the farm had been laid out.

Artifacts in the plowzone, including quantities of white salt-glazed stoneware and creamware, but no pearlware, suggested that the site was occupied from before 1750 into the 1770s.

Thomas Dawson had purchased a 100-acre tract that included the Dawson Site in 1740; according to the deed, he was already in residence at that time. A survey of the property made in 1745 shows a house, a barn, a shed, and a malt house on the property. The excavations produced no evidence of the malt house, or of brewing or malting, and according to the map the barn and shed would have been underneath U.S. 13. Thomas Dawson died in 1754, and his probate inventory survives. The inventory shows that Dawson's household included his wife, Mary, and a single African-American slave named Jenny. The total value of the estate was £54. This was an average sort of figure, and the inventory listed no luxury goods. Dawson's son sold the property in 1756, and from then until its abandonment in the 1770s the site was occupied by unknown tenants. However, the largest deposits on the site, including the one in the cellar, contained no creamware, and they seemed to date to the period of the Dawsons' ownership. These included a large collection of ceramic vessels, mostly redware and white-salt-glazed stoneware but including at least a few very elegant teaware vessels. A number of interesting small finds and a large collection of well preserved animal bone were also recovered.

THE AUGUSTINE CREEK SOUTH SITE

The Augustine Creek South Site was located in southern New Castle County, not far from Odessa (Bedell et al. 1998a). A farm was established on this spot by Samuel and

Henrietta Mahoe around 1724. Archaeological remains included a cellar hole measuring 16 by 25 feet and two post buildings (Figure 3). The cellar hole contained a large deposit of artifacts apparently dating to the 1750s, including dozens of white salt-glazed stoneware, delftware, and coarse redware vessels. One of the post buildings was in a part of the site identified as a separate cloth manufacturing area. Nearby pits contained a distinctive ashy fill with an equally distinctive artifact pattern. The most common artifacts in most of the features of the site were ceramics and animal bone, suggesting kitchen trash. In the ashy pits there was little bone and almost no ceramic, but there were numerous pieces of clay tobacco pipes and small bits of badly rusted metal. Tobacco pipe fragments were also common in the butchering area at the Whitten Road Site near Christiana, Delaware (Shaffer 1988), and they may be characteristic of such separate work areas on sites of this type. The soil in the ashy pits at Augustine Creek South also had an unusual chemical signature, with concentrations of Phosphorus and Calcium more than 10 times the site average. These chemicals could derive from urine or other organic matter and lime, both of which had many uses in cloth manufacturing.

The Mahoes were Huguenots who came to Delaware from New York or New Jersey. Samuel identified himself in surviving documents a weaver as well as a farmer. He is listed in a tax record from 1749, and a comparison with the assessments of his neighbors in St. Georges Hundred shows that he paid exactly the median amount. Samuel died in 1749, and Henrietta seems to have carried on the cloth manufacturing business, since she went to court to bind her husband's apprentice to herself. She remained a widow for six years, remarrying in 1755 to Thomas Wallace. There is no evidence that either she or Samuel had any children. The Mahoes and the Wallaces both had continual financial difficulties, and the Wallaces finally lost the farm

in 1759. Evidence from the artifacts, including the lack of creamware, seems to indicate that the site was abandoned at that time or soon afterward.

THE AUGUSTINE CREEK NORTH SITE

The Augustine Creek North Site was a small tenant farm or dwelling in New Castle County, opposite the Augustine Creek South Site (Bedell et al. 1998a). The site was discovered as part of a highway project, but it eventually proved to be mostly outside the highway corridor. Therefore, most of the site was investigated only at the Phase II level (Figure 4). This investigation the excavation of a sample of the plowzone across the site and the use of a backhoe to clear some strips and search for features. The only historic feature found was a small cellar, measuring 5 by 10 feet, with a bulkhead entrance; one half of this cellar was excavated. The artifacts from the plowzone suggested a long occupation period for the site, from before 1750 to about 1810. The site was small, about 120 by 180 feet, and the number of artifacts was not great, so the investigators believed it was a small tenant farm or residence. The site may have been occupied in two distinct periods, with a gap around 1770 to 1790. The cellar contained no creamware or pearlware and was probably filled in before 1770; the mean ceramic date was 1732. The site was located on sloping ground adjacent to wetlands along Augustine Creek, an unfavorable site, so the occupants were probably poor. In the nineteenth century, many of Delaware's African Americans lived in rather similar, swampy terrain, so the investigators of the Augustine Creek North Site think it may have been occupied by blacks, especially in the 1790 to 1810 period (Heite and Blume 1995, 1998).

HOUSING

“Georgian” entered the historical discourse as an architectural style, and changes in housing remain central to the notion of a “Georgian Mindset” (Leone 1988). The archaeological evidence of housing in Delaware, however, does not give any support to the notion that eighteenth-century people were experiencing major changes in their outlook. The houses archaeologists have uncovered have overwhelmingly been small, traditional, one or two room constructions. Even the largest houses uncovered, at the homes of well-to-do farmers, have been hall-parlor structures with only a single end chimney, no bigger than 620 square feet (Basilik et al. 1988; Bedell et al. 1998b; Coleman et al. 1984; Thomas et al. 1994). No true Georgian house, with a central passage and two end chimneys, has been found on any eighteenth-century archaeological site in Delaware. There are several standing Georgian houses in the state (Herman 1987), but the archaeological findings suggest that such structures were very rare.

The house at Augustine Creek South was probably a frame construction on brick foundations. The brick foundations had been almost entirely robbed, but a few bricks remained in place and numerous brick pieces were found in the cellar fill. The cellar measured 16 by 25 feet, and there was no evidence that the house had been any larger. At this size, it could have been either a one-room or two-room plan. The cellar was about 4 feet deep. In the center was a small circular root cellar, 21 inches in diameter and 17 inches deep, its bottom lined with oyster shell. Little window glass and rather few nails were recovered from the cellar, so the house might actually have been moved to another location rather than torn down.

The cellar at the Thomas Dawson Site was directly adjacent to U.S. 13, and part had been destroyed during the construction of that highway. The cellar did contain very interesting architectural remains. All around the interior of all the cellar walls was deposit of mixed olive gray clay and brown loam that the excavators initially called the builder's trench (Figure 5; see also Figure 2). This layer was about 8 inches thick. Little brick or stone was found in the cellar, and there were no post holes in the cellar hole, so the actual construction technique used on the house remained a puzzle. The answer became clear when a substantial portion of the "builder's trench" had been excavated. Along the bottom of this deposit, lying on the subsoil at the bottom of the cellar, was a layer of medium brown loam that clearly represented the remains of wooden beams. These beams, which must have been 8 inches wide and about 12 inches tall, once ran all around the cellar. Since such beams would not be placed at the bottom of builder's trench, they must have been the sills that supported the structure of the house. What the excavators had been calling the builder's trench was actually the wall itself. That wall had consisted of large beams, now decayed into brown loam, with clay nogging pressed into the spaces between them. Above the ground, the wall was probably covered in clapboards. It has long been known that colonial builders sometimes erected structures on sills laid directly on the ground, but after 250 years such structures leave little trace and few have been found.

Although part of the cellar had been destroyed, three corners did survive, so the dimensions could be determined. The structure defined by the sills measured 11 feet 9 inches by 13 feet 7 inches. On the southeast corner was a small extension which seemed to have a wooden floor; this was probably a storage closet. These dimensions seem too small to have comprised the entire house, but the only other structural evidence found nearby was a single

deep post hole on one corner of the small addition. Perhaps the house once extended farther in the direction of U.S. 13, or perhaps the other sections were supported by sills laid directly on the ground surface. Because of their large size it seems that the beams whose remains were found in the bottom of the cellar must have been structural elements of some kind, not just supports for cellar walls. The cellar was about 4 feet deep and contained several fills, two of which contained quantities of domestic trash. More than 4500 artifacts and 4100 animal bones were found in the cellar. These included a large amount of ceramics, especially coarse earthenware and white salt-glazed stoneware but no creamware. A structure built on wooden sills laid in the bottom of a basement would probably not have lasted more than a couple of decades and could easily have collapsed within the 15 to 20 years that the Dawsons lived on the site. The tenants who lived on the site after 1756 must have built a new house, probably in the part of the site that has been destroyed by U.S. 13. More than 1200 hand-wrought nails were found in the cellar, a large number that suggests the house above it was frame. Only 18 pieces of window glass were recovered, a very low number for a historic cellar. The Dawsons' house probably did not have many glass windows, perhaps only one.

Somewhat similar remains were found at the John Powell Site, ca. 1691 to 1735 (Grettlar et al. 1995). There, the stains left by wooden sills were found within a shallow pit. The pit measured about 15 feet across, and the stains defined a 10 by 11-foot rectangle. This pit was part of a cluster of shallow pits that were all interpreted as house remains. The pit cluster measured about 15 by 30 feet overall, and the excavators thought this roughly defined the size of the house; however, it is not clear how these pits were actually related to a house structure, if at all.

The only evidence of the house at the Augustine Creek North Site was the small cellar. The cellar measured 6 by 10 feet, plus a bulkhead entrance on one end, and was 3 feet 4 inches deep. Written records show that most tenant houses in eighteenth-century Delaware were log, and this one was probably no exception (Bedell 1998a:51). Log houses were frequently built directly on the ground, or on flimsy stone foundations that would leave no trace on a plowed site. No foundations of any kind were found at the Bloomsbury Site, a tenant farm occupied from about 1761 to 1814 (Heite and Blume 1998). At the William Strickland (ca. 1726-1762), Benjamin Wynn Tenancy (ca. 1765-1820) and Loockerman's Range (1740-1760) Sites, the only clear house remains identified were root cellars and hearths (Catts et al. 1995; Grettler et al. 1991, 1996).

FARM LANDSCAPES

Today, most of Delaware's family farms are laid out according to a common plan. The main house, often a frame I-house built in the later 1800s, faces the nearest road. In front of the house is a well-kept yard, frequently planted with flowers and shade trees. All of the barns, silos, equipment sheds, and other working outbuildings are behind the house. This division between the ornamental public space in front of the house and the working space to the rear is one of the hallmarks of Georgian farm planning, and it is old enough in Delaware to be referred to as "traditional" (Heite 1983). However, archaeology has provided no evidence of such farm plans in Delaware before 1830. Looking at the plan of the Augustine Creek South Site, it is difficult even to guess which side of the house was the front and which side the

back, since working outbuildings were positioned on both sides (Figure 6). Visitors approaching the site from the road would have walked directly past large, shallow pits containing kitchen trash and animal bones. The fences on the site were mostly short pieces with the posts at irregular intervals. Such bits of fence have been found on several other eighteenth-century Delaware sites, including the John Powell (1691-1735), William Strickland (1726-1762), and Charles Robinson (1762-1781) Plantations (Catts et al. 1995; Grettler et al. 1995; Thomas et al. 1994). It seems that Delaware farmers did not have any interest in building long, straight fences around rectangular yards. The farm plans at these three sites also resembled that at Augustine Creek South, in that they consisted of rather random groups of buildings not aligned with each other or arranged according to any obvious design.

The recovery of landscape or layout information was limited at the Thomas Dawson Site by disturbance and at Augustine Creek North by the curtailment of field work. However, the distribution of artifacts in the plowzone at both sites gives some clues. High counts of domestic artifacts were found close the houses at both sites, on all sides of the dwelling. The same was true of Augustine Creek South. Much of the trash at all these sites must have been broadcast around the house in the traditional manner. There was no sign at any of these sites of purpose-dug trash pits, or of privies. As with housing, the layout of these farms gives no evidence of interest in new, "Georgian" conceptions of order and the use of space.

BONES AND DIET

Substantial numbers of animal bones were found at all three sites, including a large and

well-preserved faunal collection at the Thomas Dawson Site. The collections were quite similar to those from other eighteenth-century Delaware sites (Bedell et al. 1998b; Catts et al. 1995; Grettler et al. 1995). The bones of domesticated and wild animals were found, but the great majority were from domesticated species. The domesticated animals included horse, cattle, pig, sheep, cat, dog, and chicken, and one foot bone from a goat. The dog and cat bones were probably from pets, since these animals were not eaten. It is interesting to note, though, that old dogs and cats were not buried in little pet graves; people in the eighteenth century were not usually that sentimental, so the bodies of pets ended up in the trash with the kitchen scraps and the butchering waste. Most of the bones from these sites were either cattle or pig, and these two species account for almost all of the meat represented. Since cattle are bigger than pigs, each cattle bone represents more meat than each pig bone, and these collection actually reflects more eating of beef than pork. Sheep bones were also rather common. The horse bones did show clear evidence of butchering, so the Dawsons and Mahoes did eat horse meat.

The wild animals eaten on these farm were mostly small, although three deer bones were found at the Thomas Dawson Site. The most common mammals were rabbit and squirrel. In the well-preserved material from the Thomas Dawson Site, opossum and raccoon were also identified. The fish were mostly small species that can be taken with a hook and line in many Delaware streams, including shad, catfish, drum, and striped bass. Turtle bones were found at all three sites; a wide variety of turtles have turned up on eighteenth-century Delaware sites, including five different species at the McKean/Cochran Farm (Bedell et al. 1998b). Overall, the wild species suggest occasional hunting and fishing in the woods and streams

around the farm, as much for recreation as for food, perhaps undertaken by boys. Oysters, however, which were found in quantity at all three sites, were probably purchased from professional watermen, since all three sites were some miles from the nearest oyster beds.

Cattle and pig bones were found from most of the parts of the animal, including the head, foot, chuck, round, loin, and prime rib. These collections therefore represent parts of the animal that are to us desirable and valuable and parts that we consider waste, or at least very poor food. This pattern, which has been found at other farm sites, provides important data on rural diets. On some urban and plantation sites, differences in the quality of meat eaten may point to status differences. In the Delaware Valley, and the northeast generally, farmers tended to eat all the parts of the animals they raised. Even quite wealthy farmers ate headcheese and pigs' feet, while bones from top cuts of meat have been found at the farms of poor tenants, like Augustine Creek North. The cattle and pig bones from all these sites had been chopped with a cleaver into large chunks of meat suitable for roasting or stewing, not into individual steaks or other small portions. This pattern, of farmers raising their own animals, eating all the parts of those animals, and hacking the meat into large pieces, is highly traditional. These families ate their beef and pork in a way that continued thousands of years of European tradition. The rather low number of some bones, especially vertebrae, suggests that the bones we found are primarily household refuse, and that the first slaughtering of the cattle was done elsewhere and the bones disposed of separately.

ARTIFACTS AND CONSUMER CULTURE

Although the houses, farm plans, and faunal material found at these sites seem to have been highly traditional, the artifacts did display some modern characteristics. Several categories of recently introduced items, made with new technologies, were found. New types of ceramic and new vessel forms spread quickly in Delaware, indicating changes in eating habits. Clothing remains at these sites seem to represent an interest in fashion (Scharfenberger 1998). Artifacts also provide some evidence of the individual personalities of some of our subjects, especially Thomas Dawson, whose character can be imagined from the documentary and archaeological remains he left behind.

VESSELS AND EATING HABITS

Minimum number of vessel calculations were performed on the potsherds from the largest features at all three sites. Taking the three sites together, 764 vessels were identified, all dating to the 1740 to 1770 period. This collection therefore provides an excellent opportunity for studying ordinary farm households in this period. The material all appeared to be redeposited, and a majority of the vessels at all three sites was less than 10 percent complete. Under these circumstances it is easier to distinguish different vessels in decorated wares, so the tables probably underestimate the number of vessels made of coarse redwares (Table 2).

Teawares were the most common vessels at both the Thomas Dawson and Augustine

Creek South Sites (Table 3). No teawares were identified in the cellar at Augustine Creek North. However, one sherd from a white salt-glazed teacup was identified in the plowzone, as well as several sherds from creamware and hand-painted pearlware teawares. Tea-drinking at Augustine Creek North certainly began in the eighteenth century, although the evidence of the cellar suggests that teawares were not in use on the site in its earliest stages.

At both the Augustine Creek South and Thomas Dawson Sites, the teawares were the best and most expensive dishes. All of the scratch blue, white salt-glazed stoneware vessels at both sites were tea-related, as were 19 of 21 porcelain vessels. The seven teapots found at Augustine Creek South included two with scratch blue flowers and one of cauliflower-pattern creamware. The Dawsons' teawares were particularly elegant. Their tea dishes includes 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 had very similar patterns and would have made a good set. In addition, there was 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). Another unusual vessel was a pear-shaped teapot of reddish stoneware, most likely a piece made by the Elers brothers (Figure 7). Elers pieces were never common and were among the finest English ceramics available to the colonists.

The tablewares at all three sites included a mix of refined, imported vessels and locally-made earthenware forms. Plates made of both delftware and white salt-glazed stoneware were found, but in small numbers. Pewter plates were the most common eating vessels at this time and place, and Thomas Dawsons' inventory lists six of them. The most common ceramic

vessel forms were small bowls and porringers. The bowls at the Thomas Dawson Site include an interesting variety of decorated delftware pieces, including white glazed vessels with blue, purple, and polychrome 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, were found at both the Thomas Dawson and Augustine Creek South Sites. These bowls have been found on almost all of the 18th and early 19th century sites that have been excavated in Delaware. The bowls and porringers are very interesting, because they speak to us about what, and how, the residents of these sites ate. Bowls could be used for soup or "chowder" and stew, which were mainstays of the traditional diet, and also for porridges, puddings, and other soft, boiled bread products. The Dawsons and Mahoes obviously owned a good many small bowls, as did most of the other farmers in Delaware whose farms have been excavated, so porridge and similar foods probably formed an important part of their diets.

Mugs were common at all three sites. Most of the mugs were made of coarse red earthenwares or white salt-glazed stoneware, but there were also examples made of Rhenish blue and gray stoneware, and the speckled earthenware known as "Midlands mottled." Many of the redware mugs had heavy interior wear, as if their contents were stirred often and vigorously. A punch bowl was identified at Augustine Creek South, and it seems likely that the Dawsons also owned at least one. To people of the eighteenth century, rum punch was for entertaining; it would have been odd for a husband and wife to make up a bowl of punch for themselves. The probable punch bowl from Augustine Creek South was made of polychrome-

painted delftware. One of the porcelain bowls from the Thomas Dawson Site 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 the neighbors. One delft bowl that was probably a punch bowl was also found at that site, as well as three bowls of unknown size, any of which could also have been punch bowls.

The food preparation and storage vessels were the familiar forms found on all sites in the Delaware Valley. Milk pans were among the most common forms at all three sites, reminding us how important dairying was in the Delaware economy (Jensen 1986). Storage jars, jugs, bowls, and chamber pots were also found. 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 points to the importance of these foods in the eighteenth-century diet.

The evidence from these sites suggests that ordinary farmers in Delaware took enthusiastically to the new style of dining that was spreading through eighteenth-century America. The new style required diners to sit around the table in straight-backed chairs, where each would be presented with his or her own knife, fork, and plate. The ceremony of “taking tea” was related to this new, disciplined sophistication. The Mahoes and the Dawsons both had quantities of decorated teawares, and the Dawsons had some quite sophisticated pieces for their tea table. By 1810, even the poor residents at Augustine Creek North owned hand-painted pearlware teacups. The Mahoes and Dawsons also owned ceramic plates, and the

Dawsons, at least, also owned pewter plates. Sherds of green-edged pearlware plates were found in the plowzone at Augustine Creek North. Forks, the key implement of the new dining, were found at both Augustine Creek South and the Thomas Dawson Site, as well as knives with the upturned, rounded points that made them useless for spearing meat. A total of 26 knives, forks, spoons, and utensil handles were found at the Thomas Dawson Site.

However, the evidence does not suggest that the new style of dining completely replaced the old. Particularly significant in this regard were the porringers found on all three sites—18 from Augustine Creek South, nine from Thomas Dawson, and one from Augustine Creek North (Figure 8). From a purely descriptive point of view, porringers are simply small bowls with handles, but in terms of dining habits they mean much more. Poringers had handles so they could be held in the hand while eating or while feeding another; in recent times porringers have been particularly connected with feeding children. Poringers are best adapted for liquid or mushy foods eaten with spoons, and many archaeologically recovered porringers have heavy stirring marks.

In the nineteenth century, porringers came to be associated with poverty, and paintings of poor beggars sometimes included porringers as symbols of their destitution (Janowitz and Affleck 1998). The archaeological evidence from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries shows that in Colonial times porringers were used by better off people as well. It is somewhat difficult to determine how common porringers actually were, because archaeologists do not seem to identify them consistently, and most are probably lost within a general “Bowl” category. The list of ceramic vessels from the Charles Robinson Plantation in New Castle County (1762-1781) does not include any porringers, but a photograph of one is included in

the report (Thomas et al. 1994:III-60). Sometimes porringers are identified in reports, probably because they still had attached handles, but because the identification is not consistent, the numbers found at various sites are probably not reliable.

How, and when, did porringers move from being a common item of every kitchen to a symbol of poverty? Although comparative site material is hard to come by, we can make some general observations about the presence of porringers on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sites. In general, from about 1760 onwards, numbers of porringers decreases. At the McKean/Cochran Farm site near Odessa deposits were found dating to two periods. 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 5 porringers among 431 vessels (Bedell et al. 1998b). 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 were eaten almost exclusively at breakfast or by children or invalids, at least among the upper and middle classes in British North America. Also, the types of vessels used to serve these foods changed from redware porringers and bowls to creamware, pearlware, and even porcelain bowls. Although a porcelain bowl could be used to eat the same foods as a porringer, it could not be used in the same way. Bowls without handles, especially if they were made of some thin, heat-conducting material such as porcelain or pearlware, could not be held in the hands, but had to be used at a table.

The decline of the porringer, therefore, was part of the same process that led to the rise of the plate and teacup, a general refinement of dining habits. Poringers hark back to an earlier tradition of food consumption, in which people did not always sit at table together. The

ceramic at the Thomas Dawson and Augustine Creek South exhibit a mixture of old and new traditions. On the one hand, the household was holding onto traditional foodways, but on the other hand, they were adopting new, genteel ways of presenting food. That the Dawsons and Mahoes accepted, at least partially, the new style of dining, we know from their plates and teacups. Their reluctance to abandon all their old eating habits is symbolized by their heavily-used porringers. 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. These porringers are an important clue to how the adoption of modern dining took place: like most important social changes it was slow, partial, and did not completely change the people who experienced it (Sahlins 1981).

BUTTONS, BUCKLES, AND FASHION

The Thomas Dawson and Augustine Creek South Sites both produced large and interesting collections of “small finds” (Tables 4, 5). Some of these objects also demonstrated interest in the new products and fashions of the eighteenth century. In particular, a large number of buttons and buckles were found that give us some hint of how the Dawsons and Mahoes dressed. Clothing was a much larger part of the average person’s purchases than ceramics, so clothing is actually a better gage of consumer behavior. The hints about dress we can pick up from the surviving hard parts are therefore very important.

Buttons have a practical function, but from the beginning their purpose has been as much to ornament the wearer as to hold on his or her clothes. (To this day, some Amish and

Mennonite groups consider buttons a violation of “plain” dressing.) The buttons from these sites clearly show their ornamental purpose. The most common type in the mid 1700s was the hollow brass button, which had 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, that is, covering the brass button with a thin layer of gold. By 1750 British metal workers could make the gold layer very thin indeed, so gilt buttons were not particularly expensive, but they cost more than brass specimens and were certainly a purely ornamental refinement. The Thomas Dawson Site still yielded nine ungilt brass buttons, pieces of six others, and 13 gilt specimens. Augustine Creek South yielded 11 brass buttons and 5 gilt. Pewter buttons, which were less expensive than brass but still nice enough to be used on gentlemen’s clothing, were found on both sites.

In addition to buttons used on coats and breeches, several sleeve buttons or cuff links were found at these sites (Figure 9). Sleeve buttons are easily distinguished from other buttons by the presence of a wire link connecting two pieces together 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 the shape of the disks changed a good deal over the course of the eighteenth century, so that many sleeve buttons can be dated. Sleeve buttons of the early eighteenth century were usually octagonal, and they were larger than those of mid-century. Early specimens measured about eleven-sixteenths of an inch in diameter, while those in later years decreased in size to approximately one-half an 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, measuring nine-sixteenths and one-half an inch in diameter with an intricate geometric design, were recovered from the Thomas Dawson Site.

More up to date were several sleeve buttons constructed of a copper or brass back with an inlaid glass or paste stone, along with unset inlays. Examples were found at both the Thomas Dawson and Augustine Creek South Sites. Paste, or "strass," is a form of faux gemstone invented around 1734 in France, which inexpensively simulated the look of colored precious and semi-precious stones (Albert and Kent 1949:4). Buttons made of paste were almost always ornamental, and used to link the ruffled cuffs of a man's shirt or the multiple buttonholed, folded boot-sleeves of coats and waistcoats (Warwick et al. 1965:154-156). The delicate structure of the diminutive paste sleeve buttons suggest their usage as a decorative fastener: aesthetically pleasing, but functionally impractical, as opposed to ones sturdily constructed, intended to withstand the rigors of daily farming. These high-fashion paste sleeve buttons, along with the gilt and pewter coat buttons and the other sleeve buttons, seem to be telling us something quite interesting about the residents of these sites. Although they were not wealthy and did not spend heavily on household goods, they dressed well and were willing to spend money to have some of the latest fashions.

Shoe buckles reinforce the impression made by the buttons and cufflinks (Figure 10). During the eighteenth-century, the shoe-buckle was another part of dress whose function was clearly overshadowed by its decorative purpose. The shoe-buckles worn by the wealthy were usually made from gold or silver and often 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.

In all, 25 shoe buckles were found at these sites, 16 at Thomas Dawson, eight at Augustine Creek South, and one at Augustine Creek North. These buckles 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 fragments. Shoe buckles of the sort recovered from these sites were understandably less expensive than those with inlaid stones or those 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. These shoe buckles reinforce the impression given by the cufflinks and other buttons that someone on these sites liked to dress fashionably.

GLASS

Teacups were part of a ritual introduced into Europe from Asia, a new refinement taken to with great enthusiasm. Europeans, however, had their own elaborate culture of drink, centered on the European aristocrats' beverage of choice: wine. Stemmed wine glasses, the most obvious artifact of wine drinking, were found at both the Thomas Dawson and Augustine Creek South Sites. At Augustine Creek South, at least three stemmed glasses were identified, as well as two tumblers and twelve wine bottles. Minimum Number of Vessels analysis was not performed on the glass from the Thomas Dawson Site, but 27 sherds of stemmed glass

were identified. While teacups represent change, in eighteenth-century contexts, stemmed wine glasses represent continuity.

OTHER FINDS

One of the most interesting artifacts found at the Augustine Creek South Site was a small brass disk, about 1½ inches across. In the center of the disk was a small, triangular hole. When this disk was cleaned off, roman numerals could be seen around the rim. The disk was part of a small sundial. The hole in the center was for a triangular pole that cast the shadow. The yard of the Mahoe farm was rather a mess, with trash on the surface and pits full of ash and bone scattered about. Where was the sundial? What purpose did it serve? Was it purely decorative, or did Samuel Mahoe (or Henrietta, or Thomas Wallace) check it to know what time to eat lunch or go to church? If it was a decoration, was some small part of the yard set aside for it? One can imagine a small square of bushes with the sundial in the center, like one of the small formal gardens at Colonial Williamsburg; but those gardens are not historically accurate, and the real gardens of eighteenth-century Williamsburg were probably much rougher and more practical (Brown and Samford 1990). Anyway, such a thing seems impossible at Augustine Creek South, in the midst of the ashy pits. Archaeology teaches us to beware of expecting consistency from people who lived in the past, any more than we expect it from our contemporaries.

At the Thomas Dawson Site a group of artifacts was found that, although of a common type, speak to us of Thomas Dawson as an individual. These were the tobacco pipe fragments.

One intact, highly decorated pipe bowl was found that 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 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). But nowhere have TD pipes made up as large a percentage of that total as at the Thomas Dawson Site. The excavators found 21 pipe bowls with maker's 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. Most likely, 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 his own, specially-made things with his monogram, but he could take advantage of the coincidence that his initials matched those of several British pipemakers.

Some of the other artifacts from the Thomas Dawson Site, combined with his probate inventory, suggest his character in interesting ways. Thomas Dawson came from a well-to-do family, but it seems that he never met his relatives' standards for worldly success. His economic path was steadily downward, and when he died he was surrounded by worn-out old things acquired years before. The Dawsons' house was a rough wooden place with rotting wooden foundations and a single window, and if Thomas had ever planned to replace it with a more permanent one he never got around to it. Many of the things in his house at his death

may have come from his or his wife's family at the time of their marriage; his two finest ceramic pieces, the Elers brothers creamer and the Burslem teapot, were both twenty years old. A gun lock found in the cellar had once been part of a fine English fowling piece, but it later had to be repaired with a clumsily-made hammer. According to his inventory, all of his furniture was "old," and his old chairs, beds, tables, chest and cupboard must have been badly worn to have been given such low values. Even his barrels and iron pots were old.

Although he was not much of an economic success, Dawson and his wife continued to keep up the social side of his upbringing. Dawson was educated, and he took his part in family affairs, serving as administrator of his relative John Dawson's estate and witnessing other documents. He enjoyed dressing well, with brightly-colored paste stones on his cuff links. For ordinary farmers the Dawsons seem to have had an extensive investment in entertaining. They had quite elegant teawares, including the molded white teapot and the red, Elers-type 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 the 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, her inventory takers noted that among her possessions were a black silk bonnet and gloves "at

Thomas Dawson's," apparently left during a visit. Since Catherine McClure also owned a black silk gown, she was a person of some wealth, or at least she liked to dress like she was.

We have no real evidence on why Thomas Dawson was not more of an economic success, but there are some grounds for speculation. The 1745 survey map shows that he toyed with malting, but since this operation left no other evidence it does not seem that he did very well at it, and he had certainly given it up by the time of his death in 1754. Although he owned more than 100 acres of land, his inventory, made in January, says that only 12 acres of it was planted in wheat, and the value of his other crops is not impressive. Certainly he does not seem to have been a very energetic farmer. It is tempting to imagine him as one of those slightly lazy dreamers, full of schemes that never really went anywhere, perhaps because he spent time drinking tea with his neighbors or rum with his friends when a man more interested in money would have been out in the fields. He preferred, perhaps, to go to parties in his fine clothes, or just to stay home with his wife, friendly and sociable to all, and let others struggle to get ahead.

CONCLUSION

When archaeologists and historians see that several changes were taking place at about the same time, their natural instinct is to lump these changes together into a movement. Once the movement has been defined, its meaning can be explored, along with its relationship to other important historical developments. Thus the spread of formal dining and taking tea, the construction of Georgian houses, the re-arrangement of farms to separate public from private

space, and a general increase in spending on consumer goods can all be combined into the “consumer revolution,” the “Georgian worldview,” or just “modernization.” The modern Georgian consumerist worldview can then be related to the rise of capitalism (Leone 1988), or the Industrial Revolution (Carson 1994), or the American Revolution (Breen 1988).

The analyses of scholars such as Deetz, Carson and Leone assume, then, that the various social developments of the eighteenth century were all expressions of some underlying change in mentality. Whatever the reason people stopped scattering their trash around their front yards, it was the same reason that they began drinking tea, using forks, and supporting radical politics. Furthermore, the cause of these developments was a profound psychological change, not just a shift in the winds of fashion. The many changes we observe in the archaeological record are signs of the creation of a new kind of person and a new society that we can call modern.

If the various changes in eighteenth-century society were the expressions of some single underlying change in mentality, then they ought to have happened at about the same time. The evidence from recently excavated sites in Delaware suggests that they did not. The residents of the Thomas Dawson Site and the sites on Augustine Creek enthusiastically embraced certain changes that were in the air around 1750, especially tea drinking, but were indifferent to others. They bought new-style consumer goods but continued to live in old-style houses. They kept their clothes up to date but not their farms, ate traditional foods on untraditional dishes, and took tea in a stylish and orderly fashion amidst their unstylish, disorderly yards. Evidence from other Delaware sites suggests that these contradictions persisted for at least another 50 years (Bedell 1999). None of the dozen eighteenth-century farm sites that have

been excavated in Delaware has presented evidence of a formal, Georgian yard plan or a formal, Georgian house. A time lag of at least 50 years, or two generations, therefore separates the acceptance of the fork and the tea ceremony from any major change in housing or farm plans.

The ordinary people of eighteenth-century Delaware did not live in the way contemporary social theorists think they should have. They present to us a contradiction, people who kept their clothes up to date but not their farms, who ate traditional foods on untraditional dishes, who took tea in a stylish and orderly fashion amidst their unstylish, disorderly yards. The contradiction, though, is in our heads, not theirs. They saw no reason why their love of sweetened tea and their enthusiasm for democracy were not compatible with many of their traditional ways of life. Perhaps, rather than expecting them to live as our theories predict, we should revise our theories to fit their lives.

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TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF BONE,
BY MINIMUM NUMBER OF UNITS (MNU)

	THOMAS DAWSON	AUGUSTINE CREEK SOUTH	AUGUSTINE CREEK NORTH
MAMMAL			
CAT	1	2	1
CATTLE	296	178	39
DEER	3	.	.
DOG	3	1	.
GOAT	1	.	.
HORSE	10	8	1
OPOSSUM	5	.	.
PIG	426	143	42
RABBIT	20	1	2
RACCOON	2	.	.
RAT	1	.	.
SHEEP	59	43	23
SQUIRREL, GRAY	37	4	.
SMALL	46	18	5
MEDIUM	48	.	.
LARGE	32	72	25
SUBTOTAL	989	470	138
BIRD			
CHICKEN	51	18	5
DUCK	5	.	.
GOOSE	2	.	2
PIGEON	1	1	1
TURKEY	.	1	.
UNIDENTIFIED	43	29	7
SUBTOTAL	102	49	15
FISH			
CATFISH	4	7	.
DRUM	271	.	.
PERCHES	11	.	.
STRIPED BASS	1	5	.
SHAD	.	44	.
UNIDENTIFIED	194	619	65
SUBTOTAL	481	675	65
REPTILE			
SNAPPING TURTLE	2	.	.
BLANDING'S	1	.	1
TURTLE			
UNID. TURTLE	11	3	.
SUBTOTAL	14	3	1
TOTAL	1586	1199	219

TABLE 2
CERAMIC VESSELS, BY WARE GROUPS

	Thomas Dawson		Augustine Creek South		Augustine Creek North	
		%		%		%
Coarse Earthenwares	180	44.4	168	53.7	34	68.0
Refined Earthenwares	33	8.1	54	15.7	10	20.0
Refined Stonewares	171	42.2	79	25.6	5	10.0
Coarse Stonewares	3	0.7	4	1.3	1	2.0
Porcelains	18	4.4	4	1.3	.	.
Total	405		309		50	

TABLE 3
 CERAMIC VESSELS FROM THE AUGUSTINE CREEK
 AND THOMAS DAWSON SITES

		Aug. Creek S.	Thomas Dawson	Aug. Creek N.
Tea	cup	30	32	2
	saucer	37	24	1
	teapot	8	10	1
	misc.	5	4	.
	<i>subtotal</i>	80 (26%)	70 (17%)	4 (17%)
Table	plate	6	3	1
	bowl	18	19	1
	porringer	18	9	1
	misc.	4	8	.
	<i>subtotal</i>	46 (15%)	39 (10%)	3 (13%)
Non-Tea	mug	30	14	8
Drinking	cup	3	.	.
	mug/jug	.	3	.
	punch bowl	1	.	.
	<i>subtotal</i>	34 (11%)	17 (4%)	8 (33%)
Storage	jar	20	9	1
	<i>subtotal</i>	20 (6%)	9 (2%)	1 (4%)
Food	milk pan	20	17	1
Preparation	pipkin	1	.	.
	<i>subtotal</i>	21 (7%)	17 (4%)	1 (4%)
Multi-Function	dish	23	11	4
	pan	26	9	1
	jug	4	6	1
	large bowl	.	2	.
	<i>subtotal</i>	53 (17%)	28 (7%)	6 (25%)
Sanitary	chamber pot	3	2	.
	ointment pot	.	.	1
	<i>subtotal</i>	3 (1%)	2 (<1%)	1 (4%)
Unid.	hollow	52	223	.
	<i>subtotal</i>	52 (17%)	223 (55%)	.
Total		309	405	24

TABLE 4
SMALL FINDS FROM THE
THOMAS DAWSON 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
Jews Harp	1	Brass Cufflinks	2
Clay Marble	1	Inlaid Cufflinks	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 Bit	2	Fork	2
Punch	2	Spoons	3
Misc. Tool Parts	2	Utensil Handle	6
Horse Shoes	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	7		

TABLE 5
SMALL FINDS FROM THE AUGUSTINE CREEK SOUTH SITE

Personal		Clothing	
Coins	2	Gilt Buttons	5
Glass Bead	1	Inlaid Buttons	3
Combs	2	Pewter Buttons	2
Activities		Other Buttons	14
Sundial Face	1	Brass Cufflinks	5
Clay Marble	1	Inlaid Cufflinks	2
Claw Hammers	2	Shoe Buckles	8
Tool Parts	2	Other Buckles	6
Horse Tack	6	Kitchen	
Hardware	17	Knives	2
Sewing Related		Fork	1
Straight Pins	54	Kettle Fragments	2
Thimbles	2	Can Fragments	3

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