

CHAPTER 7

SYNTHESIS AND EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

A. TAVERNS AND THE ROAD SYSTEM OF NORTHERN DELAWARE.

This study has re-emphasized the importance of the transportation link between the grain-producing areas of Lancaster County Pennsylvania and the waterpower and link to the outside world provided by the Christina River of New Castle County. Routes from within Lancaster County converged on the pass at Gap, and a main route then ran southeast, dividing several times into roads heading for Stanton, Newport and Wilmington in Delaware. This pattern was strongly developing in the first years of the 18th century, and was maintained and formalized through turnpiking into the early decades of the 19th.

Limestone Road was not turnpiked, but supported three taverns, Tweed's and the Mermaid Tavern, and, at the southern end, the John Ruth Inn near Stanton. The spacing of these taverns, about three to four miles apart, is no different from that of taverns along turnpiked roads. That, and the documentary data showing Tweed's as a successful, if small-scale, operation, is interpreted to mean that the status of roads as turnpikes did not necessarily give taverns an advantage. In the case of Limestone Road, easy gradients and stream crossings may have been an advantage.

B. THE TAVERN AND THE COMMUNITY

Obtaining information on the clientele of the tavern proved to be essentially impossible. No source of information was identified that could throw light on whether the tavern served locals or travelers, or on the status of the latter (drovers and teamsters or more wealthy individuals). Future research might investigate if there are other ways in which this question might be addressed.

C. THE LATER HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY AND THE PRESERVATION OF THE BUILDING

Initial contact was made with descendants of Alfred and Catherine Giacomelli at the site open day in October 1999, and additional meetings took place in 2003. These enabled an illustrated picture of life on the property from the 1930s to the 1980s to be presented. This aspect of cultural resource projects holds great promise for the future, involving the public more fully in the process and obtaining information that would otherwise be overlooked. Training in oral history techniques will be increasingly useful for cultural resource practitioners in this new environment.

Contact with the various public and non-profit agencies involved in the project: the New Castle County Historic Review Board, Preservation Delaware, the Greater Hockessin Area Development Association (GHADA), and the Hockessin Historical Society was helpful in getting word out about the project. This type of consultation could however have been more systematic and proactive, particularly in seeking input on the types of research undertaken and the form of the report. A more highly developed consultation plan, keyed to the report schedule, would have been helpful in ensuring more input from these bodies.

D. THE TAVERN AS AN EXAMPLE OF DELAWARE LOG ARCHITECTURE

The dendrochronological investigation of the building proved to be highly successful, producing tight and consistent dates in the 1790s, and calling into question the initial hypothesis that the second floor had been raised at a later date. This building is now a very securely dated example of purpose-built log architecture in the mid-Atlantic.

Comparison with other selected log buildings and other taverns in the study area (Mill Creek and the surrounding area) was successfully undertaken using Historic American Building Survey and other building records. Although the sample sizes were not large it can be concluded that the building was not unusual as a log structure, falling close to the average size within the sample. In comparison with other surviving taverns it was clearly small, suggesting it may not have offered the range of services provided by larger taverns such as the Mermaid a few miles down the road.

The detailed recordation of the building through photography, measured drawings and dendrochronology has provided a wealth of information on the construction, appearance and use of the original building and its later modifications. While questions remain about the early tavern -- Did the Tweed family actually live in the tavern or elsewhere, for instance? - the investigations were successful in identifying the bar, the cookery and the interior layout of the building. Exterior and interior wall treatments and fenestration were also identified with some confidence. The significant changes of the 19th century, ascribed to the 1830-1850 period on documentary grounds, were also fully characterized.

E. THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE TAVERN

The overall objective of the artifact analysis was to revisit the methodological approaches to tavern assemblages that had been developed since the 1970s, and which had been most recently been evaluated at the King of Prussia Inn near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Early studies on late 17th- and early 18th-century sites had indicated that tavern functions might indeed be directly reflected in artifact types, ratios and spatial patterning. As researchers turned their attention to later 18th- and early 19th-century taverns, however, the picture became more complex. It was repeatedly shown that the number of variables was too great to allow for the identification of a consistent "tavern pattern".

The recovery of an apparently sealed group of tavern-related artifacts at the Tweed's site did however suggest that re-examination of the issue might be worthwhile. The initial assessment of the collection as having a cut-off date in the mid-19th century proved to be incorrect, as some of the ironstone, in particular, was found to be of later 19th-century date. Much of the material was however from the earlier 1800s and analysis and comparisons were undertaken on this and a slightly contrasting group of material from other contexts around the house.

The main conclusion that must be drawn from the intersite analysis with several other taverns and one domestic site is that meaningful patterning cannot be discerned in the artifact data. It is hard to distinguish domestic sites from taverns, and even difficult to evaluate the observed differences between tavern assemblages. Previous researchers have also come to this conclusion, drawing attention to the complexity of material culture in the late 18th and early 19th century, and to the locational factors that may also influence the distribution of artifact types at different sites. When different archaeological techniques and terminology, and variations in the areas excavated and their stratigraphic condition are added to these factors, it is not surprising that firm conclusions are hard to draw. It may, somewhat reluctantly, be time to concentrate on other aspects of tavern archaeology, rather than to continue to search for patterns that may not exist, or at least are not discernable using current approaches.

Faunal analysis appears to be one of the more productive areas for intersite research. Comparisons between Tweed's, the Riseing Son and King of Prussia Inns showed both similarities and differences. If the faunal data from Tweed's does refer to the tavern occupation, which cannot be absolutely certain, it does appear that a more varied clientele was being served here than at the other sites. Faunal analysis should certainly be a priority for future tavern studies.

Analysis of the other artifacts at the intrasite level did suggest different circumstances and chronology for the sink hole deposit and the material from the southern end of the house. The sink hole appears to have

been used over a longer period, and also to more closely reflect disposal from a kitchen area, a suggestion confirmed by other observations, although these distinctions are somewhat subtle. Given the wide temporal range of the assemblage it is difficult to draw conclusions about the tavern clientele. The limited presence of tumblers and glasses might at first be considered informative, but this pattern is seen at other taverns also, and may not truly reflect the importance of drinking at the establishments.