PLATE 5

Lot 10A Barrel Privies Showing Wooden Floor and Open Bottom

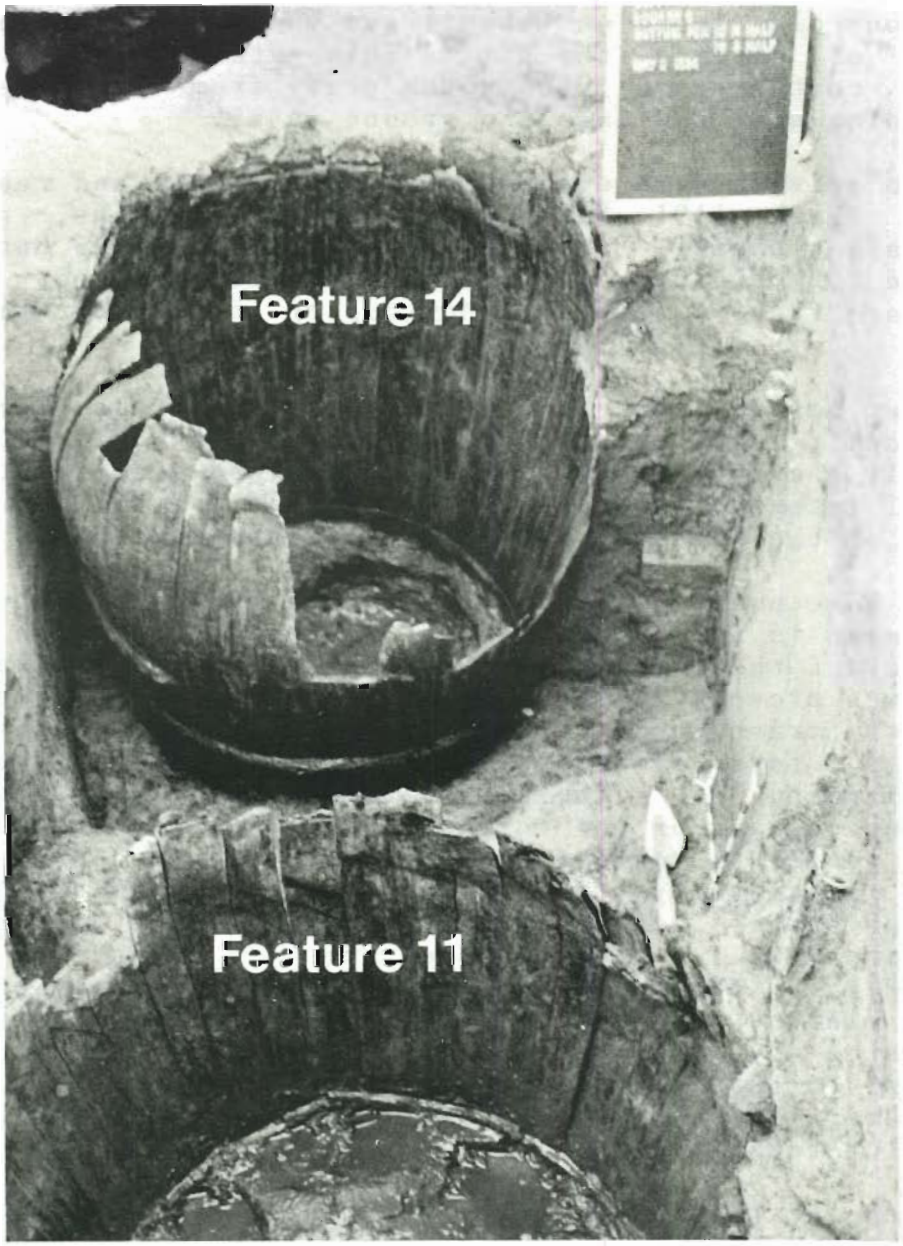

PLATE 6
Lot 10A Barrel Privy
Showing Split Sapling Exterior Bands

Lot 10A-The Lawrence Curry Site (see Table 10 for summaries of the property transactions)

Lot History

This lot is located at the corner of French and Second Streets. It fronts 90'6" on Second and 84' on French. The earliest verifiable records concerning this lot indicate that it was made up of four separate parcels (Figure 17). The parcel labeled number one (1) in Figure 17 belonged to a wealthy Wilmington merchant, Joseph Peters (or Peterson), whose administrators sold the land to William Ronsted of Philadelphia sometime around 1750. Ronsted died and left the property to his two daughters Suzanna Ronsted and Elizabeth (Ronsted) Jones. They retained the property until September 1808, when they sold it to Allen McLane of Wilmington. Throughout all of these early transactions, there is no evidence of a dwelling or structure on the lot.

The first traceable land transaction for parcel 2 on Figure 17 occured in 1780, and was the sale by John Stone of the remains of his land to James Caskey. James Caskey sold the property to Robert Caskey about a year and a half later, in 1781. Robert Caskey, a Wilmington house carpenter, mortgaged the property to John Stapler, Esquire, of Wilmington in 1785. At this time the property contained two frame tenements. Caskey evidently recovered his debt, for he and his wife subsequently sold the parcel to a cordwainer, William Bryant in 1797. Bryant was not a large property holder, as the 1798 tax assessment indicates. He was recorded as owning only one house and one lot, both not rented, and valued at $1000. He was taxed $8 for his livestock, and his total assessment was for $1258.

The parcel labeled number 3 on Figure 17 was part of Bryant's purchase from Caskey. Bryant and his wife Rachel sold this portion of the parcel, with a frame tenement, to a Wilmington shopkeeper, Philip Bonsall in 1798. Bonsall held considerably more property than Bryant, for the 1803-04 tax list for Wilmington records his estate holdings as three houses and four lots. Bonsall had evidently died sometime between 1798 and 1803. It is probable that the dwelling on Lot 10A owned by Bonsall was being used as a tenancy.

The parcel labelled number 4 on Figure 17 belonged in 1785 to John Armstrong, a Philadelphia merchant. He had purchased a portion of the parcel in August 1785 from Robery Caskey (labeled 4a) and three days later a much larger portion from the heirs of Andrew Stalcup (labeled 4b). Armstrong, an absentee landlord, died, and willed the property to his brother James Armstrong, at that time residing in Ireland. James came to the United States and proceeded to sell the property in 1804 to Mary Eaves, another absentee landlord from New York City. It is not known with certainty if a tenement or dwelling was present on the parcel throughout this period, but the price of the transaction between James Armstrong and Mary Eaves would indicate at least one such structure on the parcel.

All of these separate parcels were brought together in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In September, 1808, Allen McLane purchased first the Eaves property (4a and 4b) and then the Jones/Ronsted property. The actual transactions are not known, but sometime prior to 1821, McLane acquired both the Bryant and Bonsall parcels. McLane, who resided at the northeast corner of French and Second Streets, diagonally across the intersection from Lot 10A, was the collector of the Port of Wilmington, and was quite a wealthy man. In 1803 he was assessed for a wharf, four stores, four houses and six lots for a total assessment of over $4300. The 1816 assessment listed McLane as owning and renting two houses and lots at or near the corners of Second and French Streets, worth together over $600 annually.

McLane's will, dated 1821, presents a fairly detailed picture of the physical layout of the now unified Lot 10A (Figure 18). There was a tenant Lawrence Curry, on the old Eaves parcel, residing in a frame house. Below him, on the old Ronsted parcel, was Caleb Kirk, bellman of the City, also in a frame tenement. The portion of the old Eaves parcel fronting on Second Street may have been occupied by an Edward Gilpin as a coal lot. Below Kirk was the stable of Samuel Bush, on land of his son-in-law, Caleb Seal.

The 1816 tax assessment indicated that a Hannah Bonsall owned a house and lot that was being rented to a Mary Bonsall for $140 a month in addition to two other houses for $50 per month also on rent. One of these may have been the tenement that Bryant sold to Bonsall in 1798. Other documentary sources help to confirm and support much of this. The city directory for 1814 noted that an Abigail Gilpin resided at 28 E. Second Street (possibly related to Edward Gilpin), and that Caleb Kirk was living on French Street, below Second. Edward Gilpin`s dwelling was listed in the directory as 22 King, corner Second, clearly not on Lot 10A. The census for 1820 listed Caleb Kirk, Lawrence Curry, and Edward Gilpin as being present in Wilmington, and the 1816 tax assessment recorded Gilpin and Kirk: Gilpin with an assessment, including two houses and three lots, of over $2700; Kirk, with no real estate, at only $150. Lawrence Curry was not recorded in the 1814 Street Directory, but he was assessed a similar amount to Kirk`s in 1816. Thus he and his family of four arrived in Wilmington sometime around 1815. Curry was still present in Wilmington in 1825, as the records of the estate sale of John Pogue (see Lot 8B) include his name and his purchases.

Allen McLane, after willing his property to his son Louis, died in 1829. Louis McLane retained the property for 20 years. In 1845, Louis's estate was assessed for a two-story brick house and lot, on the corner of French and Second (probably his father's old house), a 1-story frame house and lot, also at the corner of French and Second, and a 1-story frame house and 2-story frame stables and lot at the corner of French and Second. It seems reasonable to assume that the last mentioned frame houses and stable were located on Lot 10A. Overall, McLane's estate, consisting of 11 houses and 12 lots, was worth $14,300. The lot 10A properties accounted for perhaps $2200 of his total amount.

Louis McLane senior appears to have either sold or willed his property to his son, Louis, Jr. In 1849 Louis, Jr. who was residing in Baltimore sold the entire lot to a Wilmington carter, William Peoples. Peoples evidently made some structural changes on the lot, as evidenced by the tax assessment of 1857 to 1861. In that list, Peoples was assessed for a frame shop and lot at the corner of French and Second (worth $400) and for a 3-story brick dwelling and a 2-story brick stable, both on French between Front and Second. The dwelling was worth $800 and the stable, $400, for a total valuation of $1600.

Peoples disposed of the parcel numbered 1 on Figure 19 in 1854 to a Wilmington blacksmith, Patrick Higgins. Higgins sold the same parcel to Daniel Ward three years later. Ward was recorded in 1866 as owning a frame stable (worth $700) at the southwest corner of French and Second--clearly the same parcel, but with an improved or repaired stable.

Robert S. Smith purchased the parcel labeled number 2 on Figure 19 from William Peoples in 1858. Nine years later, he bought parcel 1 from Daniel Ward. Once again the lot was in the hands of a single owner. Smith, like Peoples and Ward before him, was a carter. In the 1850 census he appears as a laborer boarding with William Peoples' household of eight. Smith was age 20, and had been born in Ireland. Another Irishman, Patrick Smith, also age 20, lived with Peoples as a laborer at the same time. By 1860, Smith was recorded as a master carter, and he lived with his wife, Mary E. age 20, and their one year old son, Robert. Also present in the household in 1860 was a 30 year old Irishman, John Mullen who was listed as a laborer. Figure 19 illustrates the physical layout of Lot 10A by the time of Smith's ownership. An efficient house numbering system had finally been adopted by the Wilmington City Council in 1859, thus assigning the West side of French Street with odd numbers. Smith owned 119, 121, and 123 French Streets, with the corner of French and Second unnumbered. A brick stable occupied 119 French, a 3-story brick dwelling house was located at no. 121, and a 24' lot was at no. 123. At the corner of French and Second stood and "old frame stable." In addition, Smith owned a 3-story brick dwelling at 114 E. Second. All of these holdings were assessed for $3400 in 1870. By 1877, Smith's real estate included a 1-story frame office at the back of no. 123, and a 1-story brick office addition, north of no. 121.

Extensive investigations into the city directories show Smith to have shared his business address at 121 French Street with at least two other carters. In 1862, Nathaniel Biddle was working out of the same address, and by 1879 Robert Gibson, who owned a livery and sale stable across the street, resided there. Smith appears to have lived at 121 French from about 1858 to 1879 at which time he moved his residence to 910 King Sreet. After Smith's move up King Street, no. 121 French was occupied by a variety of tenants, all of whom worked elsewhere in the city. The tenure of each of these occupants was of short duration (Table 27). Smith was a well-known carter, as evidenced by his advertisements in the city directories and in the newspapers. His business was in a good location--near the Christiana wharves, and closer still to the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad depot. The real estate values of his property ranged between $440 in 1870 to $8200 circa 1884. Throughout this period he had about $1200 worth of livestock working his business.

Table 27

Lot 10A Occupants, compiled from Wilmington City Directories

Date	Address(French)
1862	121: Robert S. Smith, cartman Nathaniel Biddle, cartman
1870	117,119,121: Robert S. Smith, carter 128: Lenhardt Wais, lager beer saloon
1872-1874	117,119,121,123: Robert S. Smith, carter
1879	117,119,123: Robert S. Smith (117&119 Stables, 123 shop) (residence at 910 King) 121:Robert Gibson, livery and sale stable
1880	117,119: Robert S. Smith, stables 121: Joseph J. Irwin, hostler Robert M. Gibson, livery and sale stable 123: Robert S. Smith, carter (residence at 910 King)
1881	117,119: Robert S. Smith, stables 121: Robert M. Gibson, livery, feed and sale stables 123: Robert S. Smith, carter (office) (residence at 910 King)
1882	117,119: not listed 121: Robert M. Gibson, livery and sale stable 123: Robert S. Smith, carter (residence at 910 King)
1883	117,119: Robert S. Smith, carter 121: Robert M. Gibson, livery stable at 118 French (this is residence) 123: Robert S. Smith, carter (residence at 910 King)
1888	119: G. W. Bush and Sons stables 121: Joseph C. Garwood John Preston, physician 123: (French to corner): Robert S. Smith (residence at 910 King)
1889	119: G. W. Bush and Sons stables 121: Joseph C. Garwood 123: (French to corner): George White, carter
1890	119: G. W. Bush and Sons stables 121: George D., John D., and John W. Farra 123: (French to corner): George White, carter (residence at 608 King)