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The Archaeology of the Matron's Cottage: a Household of Female Employees at Sailors' Snug Harbor, Staten Island, New York

Sherene Baugher

At Sailors' Snug Harbor (1833 – 1976), a charitable institution for retired seamen located on Staten Island, New York, the Matron's Cottage housed the unmarried, full-time, female employees. From 1845-1880, it also housed the Steward and his wife in separate quarters. The women worked as seamstresses, cooks, and washerwomen. The Matron was an educated woman who could keep detailed records and was the director of the female staff. The archaeological evidence at the site of the Matron's Cottage, together with primary source documents, reveals information on the life of these 19th-century working-class women within their household. To place the living conditions of these working-class women within the context of the conditions of other working-class women, comparisons and contrasts are made with the archaeological data gathered by Mary Beaudry and Stephen Mrozowski at another working-class women's site, the boarding houses at Boott Mills in Lowell, Massachusetts.

Au site de Sailors' Snug Harbor (1833 – 1976), une organisation caritative pour marins à la retraite, situé à Staten Island, dans l'état de New York, une maison appelée Matron's Cottage (maison de la matrone) servait à héberger les femmes célibataires qui y travaillaient à temps plein. Entre 1845 et 1880, l'intendant et sa femme y vivaient aussi dans des quartiers différents. Les femmes qui y travaillaient occupaient des emplois de couturières, de cuisinières et de blanchisseuses. La matrone, une femme éduquée qui pouvait garder des registres détaillés, était la directrice des employées du centre. L'étude de l'évidence archéologique du site de Matron's Cottage et des sources primaires révèle de l'information sur la vie de ces femmes de la classe ouvrière du XIX^e siècle au sein de leur résidence. Afin de situer les conditions de vie de ces ouvrières dans le contexte des conditions d'autres ouvrières, des comparaisons et des contrastes ont été relevés grâce à l'information obtenue par Mary Beaudry et Stephen Mrozowski au site de Boott Mills. Situé à Lowell au Massachusetts, la pension de Boott Mills a aussi été le lieu de travail de plusieurs ouvrières.

Introduction

Archaeology at the charitable institution Sailors' Snug Harbor has revealed detailed information on the lives of the impoverished retired seamen who resided there; one of the directors of the institution, Thomas Melville, brother of the famous author Herman Melville; and the working-class women employees. Archaeologists have become increasingly interested in the archaeology of institutions including almshouses, orphanages, poor farms, schools, hospitals, and prisons (e.g., Baugher and Spencer-Wood 2001, Beisaw and Gibb 2009, Casella 2007). Archaeologists in the northeast have produced many of the published case studies on these institutions. The sites include almshouses (Baugher 2001, 2009, Baugher and Lenik 1997, Huey 2001, Peña 2001), asylums (De Cunzo 1995, 2001, Garman and Russo 1999), orphanages (Feister 1991) and poor farms (Bell 1993, Elia and

Wesolowsky 1991). Additional case studies on almshouses exist in numerous Cultural Resource Management reports, such as the Phase II work on the "poor house" in Falmouth, Massachusetts (Strauss and Spencer-Wood 1999) and the Sailors' Snug Harbor reports associated with the seamen (Baugher et al. 1985; Cotz 1984). These studies have focused on the life of the inmates in these institutions and/or examined the power dynamics between the people managing the institutions and the inmates.

In the past two decades, there have also been numerous gender studies in historical archaeology, including published thematic journals and books (e.g., Walde and Willows 1991; Scott 1994; Spencer-Wood and Baugher 2001; and Rotman and Savulis 2003). Feminist research has been undertaken at diverse archaeological sites including homes of upper-class, middle-class, and working-class women, plus sites of women in almshouses, asylums,

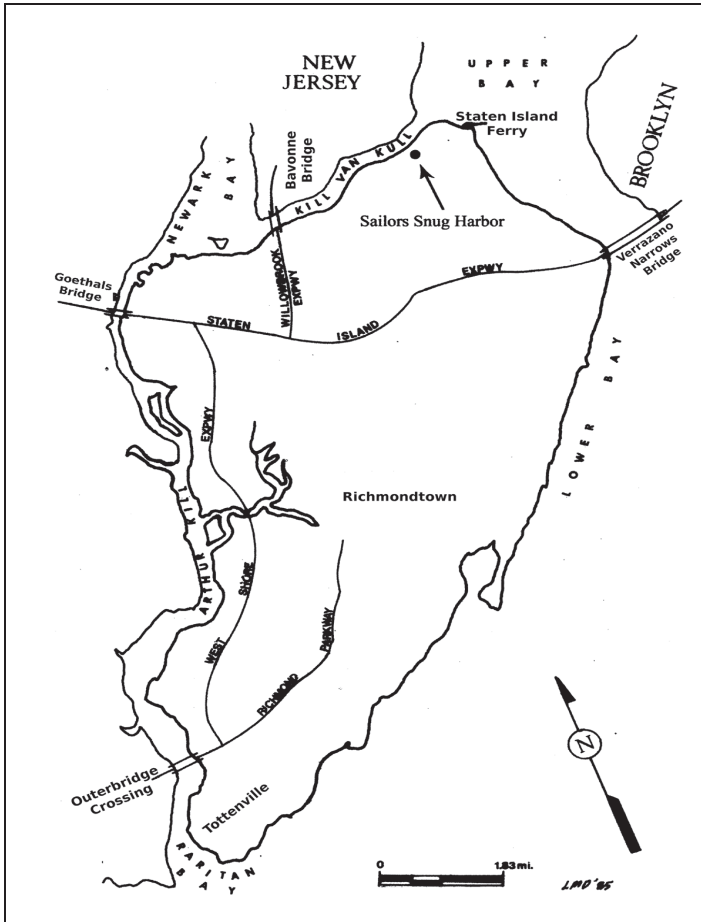


Figure 1: A map showing the location of Sailors' Snug Harbor on Staten Island (map drawn by Louise De Cesare and revised by Charles Burgess).

and prisons. Many of these publications have focused on just one site. There have been a number of comparative gender studies in historical archaeology, such as Suzanne Spencer-Wood's (1987) analysis of middle-class and upper-class domestic reformers in Boston, Diana Wall's (1994) archaeological study of the cult of domesticity among middle-class and elite women in Manhattan, and Donald Hardesty's (1994) study of gender roles within several mining camps and towns in the American West.

Especially after 1800, women sought work beyond the home or the farm. Women could find jobs as milliners, seamstresses, cooks, maids, and domestic help. Some of these jobs were in substantial institutions such as Sailors' Snug Harbor, which had large staffs of men and women living on the premises. This article

focuses on the female employees who lived and worked at Sailors' Snug Harbor during the 19th century.

Sailors' Snug Harbor provided work and lodging for female employees within a primarily male sphere of retired seamen and male administrators. The institution was located on the north shore of Staten Island in New York City (FIG. 1). The female staff members at the Matron's Cottage were single. They were responsible for the institution's laundry: washing and ironing the clothes, bed linens, towels, and table cloths used by approximately 800 people (Baughner and Baragli 1987). An educated woman, the Matron, directed these women and kept the records of her department. The women toiled in a washhouse located near the Matron's Cottage (FIG. 2). They also worked as seamstresses, mending the residents' clothing. From 1867 to 1884, between six and thirteen women were living at the Matron's Cottage (Governor's Quarterly Report 1867-1881; Matron's Records 1873-1900). The number of female employees increased to accommodate the work generated by the rising number of retired seamen. These women received their free meals either at the large dining room or, after 1873, in the Matron's Cottage. The women also received lodging in the Matron's Cottage as part of their compensation.

What was it like to live in the Matron's Cottage during the second half of the 19th century? The archaeological evidence and the primary source documents reveal information on the living conditions of these working-class women. The gendered experience of the working-class women at Sailors' Snug Harbor will also be compared to the working-class women who lived in company-owned boarding houses



Figure 2: The female staff in the laundry at Sailors' Snug Harbor (date unknown, photographer unknown, courtesy Snug Harbor Cultural Center).

at the Boott Mills in Lowell, Massachusetts (Mrozowski, Ziesing, and Beaudry 1996). Boott Mills and Snug Harbor provided housing for single female employees. Both sites offer ample archaeological and documentary data on housing, health, sanitation, diet, dining, and smoking. Both Snug Harbor and Boott Mills were private secular organizations employing women. While there are some similarities between the two organizations there is a key difference; one organization was a profit-making enterprise while the other enterprise was a charitable institution.

The Establishment and History of Sailors' Snug Harbor

Robert Richard Randall was a successful New York City merchant, gentleman farmer, son of a sea captain, and a member of the Marine Society of the City of New York. He was the founder of Sailors' Snug Harbor (Barry 2000: 2-9). In a gesture of charity, Randall, a bachelor, provided in his will that the bulk of his considerable estate be used to establish a retirement home for "aged, decrepit, and worn-out sailors" (Shepherd 1979: 15-17).

Sailors' Snug Harbor opened in 1833. The aged and injured seamen who lived there had served on American merchant ships, and some of the men were former captains or officers in the civilian merchant marine (Barry 2000: 40, 80). Some of the seamen had served in the Navy (Hardin 1983: 1). The administrators of Sailors' Snug Harbor were selective about who was admitted and denied admission to seamen who were alcoholics or were of "immoral character" (Barry 2000: 42). From 1867 to 1884, the population of mariners at Snug Harbor nearly doubled to 800 retired seamen, supported by a staff of employees who lived on the grounds (Barry 2000: 98).

A single Greek Revival dormitory housed the first seamen when the institution opened in 1833, but additional dormitories and other buildings were added during the 19th century (Shepherd 1979). The dormitories at Sailors' Snug Harbor were surrounded by numerous service buildings such as shops, barns, a laundry, and a hospital, as well as residential structures to house the staff of employees who lived on the 160-acre grounds, 80 of which made up Snug Harbor's own farm (FIG. 3). However, after World War II, the population of

seamen declined and the institution sold 80 acres of Snug Harbor's farmland (Shepherd 1979: 32-33). Finally, in 1976, the institution and its current population of retired seamen moved to a new facility in North Carolina (Barry 2000: 161). The remaining 80 acres were sold to New York City (Shepherd 1979: 35). The city-owned land includes the shoreline property and all of the surviving institutional buildings, including seven New York City landmarked buildings (Baughner et al. 1985). One of the surviving buildings is the Matron's Cottage, which is not landmarked. The city-owned property has been transformed from a retirement home for seamen into a cultural center with a botanical garden, a performing arts center, museums, and a park.

Archaeological Research at Sailors' Snug Harbor

Between 1984 and 1990, the City Archaeology Program at the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, then under the direction of the author, undertook research and archaeological excavations at Snug Harbor. The archaeological work was conducted prior to major construction projects by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York City Parks Department. This archaeological work was not mandated by any city, state, or federal regulations and was simply a voluntary effort by city agencies. The archaeological research and excavations at Sailors' Snug Harbor primarily focused on questions regarding the life of the seamen within this 19th-century charitable institution and the physical expansion of the institution over time (Baughner et al. 1985,

and Baughner and Lenik 1990). In 1985, because of construction, my colleagues and I had the opportunity to test the areas around the Matron's Cottage. Phase 1A and IB studies and Phase two excavations were undertaken (Baughner, Baragli, and De Cesare 1985; Baughner and Baragli 1987). The fieldwork provided significant archaeological data on these female employees.

Since my original work at Snug Harbor (1984-1990), additional primary source materials have become available in the archives of the Staten Island Historical Society and in the newly conserved archives of the Noble Maritime Museum at the Snug Harbor Cultural Center. Also, the electronic archival index to the voluminous Sailors' Snug Harbor archives at State University of New York (SUNY) Maritime College in the Bronx has made it easier to find relevant primary source documents among the thousands of pages of boxed documents including monthly purchases, monthly salary payments, minutes of the Board of Trustees meetings, and staff reports. With so many newly available primary source documents, I decided to undertake additional



Figure 3: The main dormitory buildings at Sailor's Snug Harbor, Staten Island, New York (Photo: Sherene Baughner).



Figure 4: The Matron's Cottage (Photo: Carl Forster).

documentary research and to re-examine the Matron's Cottage archaeological collection. The data uncovered in stratified deposits associated with the 19th-century female employees provided information regarding gender roles within Snug Harbor's built environment and landscape. The history sections below focus on the time period of the archaeological assemblage, 1845 to 1890.

The History of the Matron's Cottage

The Matron's Cottage (FIG. 4) was designed in 1845 by Frederick Diaper [sic] (Gibson, Shepherd, and Bauer 1979, vol. 2: 4.11/1). The Matron's Cottage was located behind the elegant columned dormitories along a second row of less-striking buildings. The building was near the laundry where the female employees worked and close to most of the service buildings including the carpenter shop, the blacksmith shop, the hospital, and the morgue (FIG. 5). The Matron's Cottage was a large, two-story brick house with a cellar and an attic. The living quarters were divided into two equal apartments. One was for the Steward of Snug Harbor and his family, while the other was for the single female employees. Hence the building was originally known as the Steward's Residence (Gibson, Shepherd, and Bauer 1979, vol. 2: 4.11/1). The Steward was in charge of purchasing all supplies and he assisted the

Governor (the Director of Snug Harbor) in managing the institution (Baugher and Baragli 1987: 46). From 1845 to 1873, the Matron (the supervisor of the female employees) was also the wife of the Steward, so it made sense to have the Steward and the Matron living in the same building with the female employees (Baugher and Baragli 1987: 46-47). In 1880, the Steward moved into a new residence in a more prominent location near the west gatehouse entrance. After 1880, the Steward's Residence became known as the Matron's Cottage and was used exclusively as a dormitory space for the unmarried Matron and her female associates (Gibson, Shepard, and Bauer 1979, vol. 2: 4.11/1). Although the building has had two names (Steward's Residence from 1845-1880 and Matron's Cottage from 1880-1976), I have used the term Matron's Cottage to describe this building because this term was used for 96 of its 131-year history and because it is the term currently used by the Snug Harbor Cultural Center.

The name, Matron's Cottage, reveals an interesting gender bias. When the Steward and his wife lived there along with the single women, it was known as the Steward's Residence. When only women lived in the building, it became known as the Matron's Cottage – a term used to imply domesticity. Although the building had not contracted in size, its new name implied it had contracted in

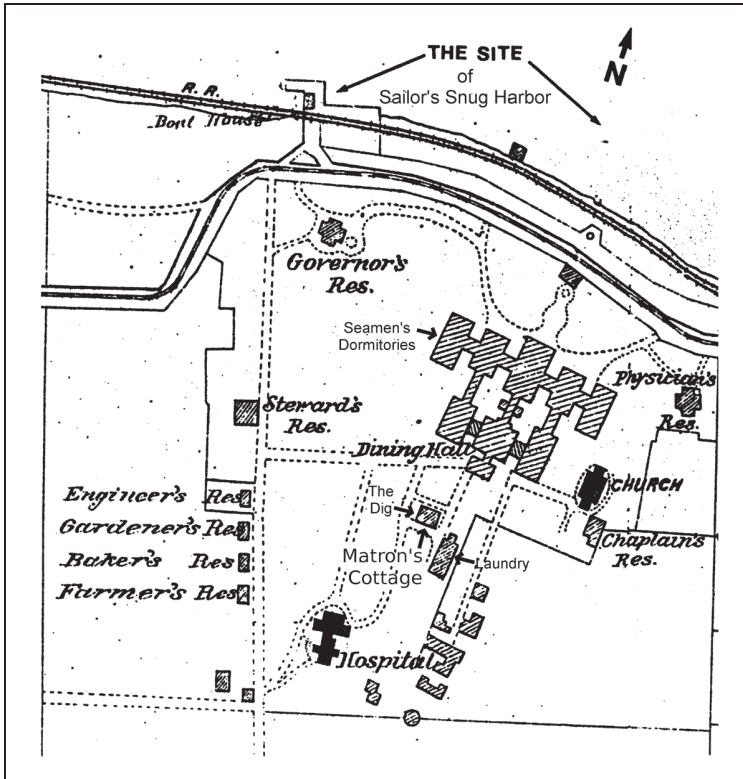


Figure 5: Map showing the location of the buildings at Sailors' Snug Harbor in 1887. The location of the Matron's Cottage archaeological excavation is indicated on this map (Source: Atlas of Staten Island, Richmond County, New York, J. B. Beers).

status. It is the only structure on the 160-acre property that is referred to as a "cottage." Within the female sphere, it also implied a hierarchy: it is "the Matron's Cottage" not "the women's cottage" or "the women's residence." The name implied the subordination of the female employees who lived in the house and carried out the domestic tasks supervised by the Matron.

Thomas Melville, the Governor of Snug Harbor, 1867-1884

While the length of the day for the single female employees at Snug Harbor may not have been dramatically different from their working-class peers in factories, their working conditions and their material surroundings were better. The superior environment was due to Thomas Melville, the most influential Governor of Sailors' Snug Harbor. Melville was

responsible for transforming the institution physically by erecting new buildings and doubling the enrollment (Shepherd 1979: 23). The majority of the Matron's Cottage archaeological assemblage is from 1860-1890, which falls within the long period of Thomas Melville's directorship of Snug Harbor (1867-1884). In addition, the most detailed historical records that have survived are from Melville's term in office.

Thomas Melville was a brother of the famous American author, Herman Melville whose novel *Moby Dick* had appeared in 1851 (FIG. 6). Thomas Melville was born into an affluent family but when he was a young child his father, Allan Melville, through a series of bad investments,

went bankrupt and died in 1832 heavily in debt (Hillway 1963: 29-31). At age 16, Thomas Melville went to sea on a whaler and by the time he was 29 years old he was the captain of a clipper ship (Boies 1966: 25). At age 37, Thomas Melville became the fourth governor of Sailors' Snug Harbor (Shepherd 1979: 22). The Governorship of Snug Harbor was a status position. The Board of Trustees of Snug Harbor provided Melville with a salary and the use of an elegant, three-story, 30-room mansion plus seven to eight servants (Parker 2002: 652). For Thomas Melville, this may have been a return to the elite lifestyle he enjoyed as a child before his father's bankruptcy. "Tom's paradise" is the term Herman Melville used to describe Snug Harbor's Governor's mansion and the surrounding private gardens (Davis and Gilman 1960: 236).

Thomas Melville ran Snug Harbor the way a captain would run his ship, with hierarchy

and tight control. Thomas Melville was also a man with a grand vision for the built environment of Snug Harbor, and he was supported and rewarded by the Board of Trustees during his 17 years as Governor (Shepherd 1979: 22). Snug Harbor's large endowment from the Randall fortune paid for the implementation of Thomas Melville's vision of a charitable institution with impressive buildings and beautifully landscaped grounds (Shepherd 1979).

In his first years as Governor, Melville improved the efficiency of the institution. In his December 1867 quarterly report to the Board of Trustees, Melville suggested the practicality and economy of hiring husband-and-wife teams. He suggested hiring a "practical farmer" who understood farming and whose wife would "take charge of the milking" of Snug Harbor's dairy herd (Governor's Quarterly Report, December 1867: 2). Melville also hired Captain and Mrs. Curtis as the Steward and the Matron, another efficient husband-and-wife team. In his records, Melville rarely provided first names for his employees.



Figure 6: Thomas Melville when he was the Governor of Sailor's Snug Harbor (Photographer unknown, circa 1867, courtesy of the Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts).

Perhaps this reflects his practice at sea when he referred to his men just by their last names. In the next quarterly report to the board, Melville requested permission to purchase a sewing machine because "the Matron and Seamstress have so much mending for the inmates to do besides making and repairing sheets, pillow cases, table cloths, etc." (Governor's Quarterly Report, March 1868: 6). Melville also suggested purchasing inmate clothing "from a responsible clothing house rather than employ irresponsible persons [who did not live at Snug Harbor] to make up the clothing" (Governor's Quarterly Report, March 1868: 7). Because Sailors' Snug Harbor had an ample endowment, Melville's requests were granted. From 1868 to 1883, Melville purchased all inmates' clothing from Brooks Brothers in New York City (Melville's Daily Journal, 1868-1883).

During Melville's tenure, numerous women worked at Snug Harbor. Between 1872 and 1883, many of the women were local women hired as temporary employees for a few weeks every spring to clean the buildings (Melville's Daily Journal 1872-1883). Some women were also employed as servants in the Snug Harbor homes of the doctor, the chaplain, and other upper echelon staff and these women may have resided in the residences (Governor's Quarterly Report, June 1868: 14). The only building set aside to provide lodging for the full-time female employees was the female employees' side of the Matron's Cottage. The seamstresses, laundresses, female cook, and scrubwomen were all single and lived here.

Clash Between Melville and the Matrons

Thomas Melville had a reputation for asserting total control of Snug Harbor. Melville was a strong disciplinarian who was disliked by many of the residents (Shepherd 1979: 23). Eventually there was a power clash between the Steward, his wife the Matron, and Melville. The first recorded problem between Melville and the Steward and Matron was in 1871 but unfortunately, the surviving records do not explain the charges. On March 27, 1871, Melville noted that Captain Curtis and Mrs. Curtis were removed from their office. There was an appeal on April 3 and Captain Curtis

Table 1: Comparison of Salaries at Sailors' Snug Harbor in 1880

<i>Job</i>	<i>Wage per Month</i>	<i>Wage per Year</i>
Governor	\$333.3	\$4,000
Physician	\$250	\$3,000
Steward	\$166.6	\$1,999
Engineer (Chief)	\$100	\$1,200
Apothecary (male)	\$ 50	\$ 600
Matron*	\$ 50	\$ 600
Baker	\$ 50	\$ 600
Assistant Engineer	\$ 45	\$ 540
Carpenter	\$ 45	\$ 540
Chief Cook (male)	\$ 40	\$ 480
Engineer's helper	\$ 30	\$ 360
Fireman	\$ 25	\$ 300
2nd Cooks (male)	\$ 20	\$ 240
Nurses (male)	\$ 18	\$ 216
Watchmen	\$ 18	\$ 216
Seamstress (head)*	\$ 14	\$ 168
Assistant cooks (male)	\$ 12	\$ 144
Cook in Matron's Cottage (female)*	\$ 12	\$ 144
Clerk (male)	\$ 12	\$ 144
Seamstress (assistant)*	\$ 12	\$ 144
Laundress*	\$ 12	\$ 144
Scrub Women*	\$ 12	\$ 144
Misc. Jobs (Male) waiters, laundrymen, mattress makers, librarians, office aids	\$ 6	\$ 72
Lodge keepers, bread cutters, buttermen	\$ 5	\$ 60

denied Melville's charges (Melville's Daily Journal 1871). On April 10, 1871, the Board of Trustees finally decided against the Steward and Matron, and they were ordered to pack up and leave Snug Harbor (Melville's Daily Journal 1871). The relationship between Captain Curtis and Melville was so negative that Melville had an inventory made of everything in the Steward's apartment that belonged to Sailors' Snug Harbor and made sure that Captain and Mrs. Curtis did not remove any institutional property (Melville's Daily Journal 1871).

On May 15, 1871 Captain Nicklason, another former sea captain, was appointed Steward, and his wife was hired as the Matron (Melville's Daily Journal 1871). This working relationship between the Nicklasons and Melville lasted less than two years. Melville's report to the Trustees in March 1873 noted that he was in a power struggle with Captain and Mrs. Nicklason. He was especially outraged by the independence of Mrs. Nicklason, noting:

The present matron has told me several times when I have spoken to her that she was appointed by the Trustees and that I had nothing to do with her or her department (Governor's Quarterly Report, March 31, 1873).

Melville concluded that the functions of the Steward and Matron should be clearly separated and that it was nepotism to have the paid position of Matron filled by the Steward's wife (Governor's Quarterly Report, March 1873). Ironically this was a reversal of Melville's earlier position on the value of hiring husband and wife teams.

Melville noted his view of the job credentials for the matron (which clearly Melville believed Mrs. Nicklason lacked):

To fill the position of matron it is necessary to have a woman who has been accustomed to work, and is not above performing the duties of her office (Governor's Quarterly Report, March 1873).

However, while the Nicklasons were still living in their apartment in the Matron's Cottage, a new Matron, a Miss Gleason, was hired in



Figure 7: The Matron (seated) and the female staff at Sailors' Snug Harbor (date unknown, photographer unknown, courtesy Snug Harbor Cultural Center).

October 1873. Melville noted that Miss Gleason "is a very superior and capable woman" (Governor's Quarterly Report December 1873). Miss Gleason's presence necessitated new separate quarters for her inside the female employees' half of Matron's Cottage. Captain Nicklason and his wife were so angry at the firing of Mrs. Nicklason, the hiring of Miss Gleason, and the moving of Miss Gleason into the quarters next to their apartment that Captain Nicklason resigned. On January 9, 1874, Captain Nicklason moved out all of his furniture and on January 19, the new Steward, Joseph Clark and his wife, moved into the Matron's Cottage (Melville's Daily Journal 1874).

Miss Gleason lived in the Matron's Cottage in the section set aside for her female staff. By 1878, overcrowding in the women's half of the cottage prompted Governor Melville to recommend that a new house be built for the Steward (Governor's Quarterly Report, December 1878). In June 1880, the Steward and his family moved into their elegant new home. The former Steward's Residence now became known as the Matron's Cottage and it was used solely by the Matron (FIG. 7) and her female staff (Governor's Quarterly Report June 1880).

The economic position of the Matron was not equal to the top male staff but it was equal or higher than some middle range male staff. Table 1 provides a comparison of wages of

different employees at Sailors' Snug Harbor in 1880. To put these salaries in perspective, in 1880, U.S. government clerks were earning \$1,200, skilled workers averaged about \$578 with a few earning as high as \$873, and unskilled factory workers in Philadelphia were earning about \$350 per year (Blumin 1989: 272-273). All of these workers had to pay for their own housing. At Snug Harbor, the Physician (\$3,000) and the

Steward (\$2,000) had good salaries and they each had their own large homes. The Matron was earning a salary of \$600, which was equivalent to a skilled factory worker (\$578 - \$873), plus she received free housing (Sailors' Snug Harbor 1880). As for the female employees, they received only \$144 per year, which was less pay than unskilled factory workers (\$350 per year), but when housing and meals are factored in, the salaries are reasonably equal (Sailors' Snug Harbor 1880). While most of the female employees were at the lower end of the Snug Harbor pay scale, their salaries were equivalent to some of the male employees and actually higher than some male employees.

The Matron's Cottage Excavation

In 1985, under my supervision, eight shovel tests were placed around the western and southern sides of the Matron's Cottage. These shovel tests were placed along the corridor of a proposed conduit line. We found very few artifacts except in one location, in the western side yard where there was a natural depression in the ground that served as a refuse pit for the house. We placed five excavation units in this location (FIG. 8). The units were 4 ft. by 4 ft. A fifth unit was a half unit (4 ft. by 2 ft.) and it was opened to determine the dimensions of an historic pathway.

In four of the five squares we found the crushed stone base of an early 20th century



Figure 8: Archaeological excavation at the Matron's Cottage (Photo: Sherene Baughner).

road just below the sod (between 22 ft. and 32 ft. from the western side of the Matron's Cottage). Below this road base, two squares contained the remnants of a late-19th-century stone footpath. Below this layer were mixed deposits that dated between 1870 and 1890.

Below the post-1870 deposits was a layer of deep red soil (Munsell 7.5 YR 4/6) approximately six inches deep (FIG. 9). Below this red stratum was a dark brown layer (Munsell 10YR 3/3) also approximately six inches thick. Both of these layers contained artifacts dating from 1845 to 1870. At the same depth as this mid-19th-century dark-brown stratum, two trenches were uncovered. Each trench was two feet wide. One trench continued to a depth of four feet and the other ended at seven feet below grade. Each trench contained a clay drain pipeline. Preservationist Donald Plotts at the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission noted that similar clay drainpipes were used for water and sewer lines during the mid-to-late 19th century (Plotts, personal communication 1985). Based on the artifacts in these two trenches, the two drainpipes appeared to have been installed in the 1860s. Below the trenches and the dark-brown layer was sterile soil.

Almost 4,000 artifacts dating to the period 1845-1900 were unearthed in these five excavation units. The assemblage contained a wide

variety of objects including broken dishes, glasses, bottles, clay smoking pipes, buttons, and food remains such as beef and chicken bones. At the Matron's Cottage site, the artifacts are assignable to two distinct time periods: 1) 1845-70 and 2) 1870-1900. These dates almost mirror the two distinct periods of occupancy of the house: 1) 1845-80 and 2) 1880-1900+. As noted above, from 1845-80, the Steward and his wife had an apartment in the building as their private residence. The Steward's presence in the Matron's Cottage ceased when he and his family moved to their new residence in 1880. After 1880, the Matron's Cottage was used solely as living quarters by the Matron and the female employees. The archaeological artifacts represent these distinct periods of residency (Baughner and Baragli 1987).

The documentary records provided information that enabled the author to distinguish kitchen deposits discarded by the Steward from those discarded by the female staff. The stratigraphic deposits dating between 1845 and 1870 can be attributed to the Steward and his wife. Until 1873, the female employees who lived in the Matron's Cottage ate all their meals in the general kitchen, located next to the seamen's dining hall. Thus any food assemblages before 1873 can be attributed to the Steward's family. In 1873, a woman was hired to cook for

the female employees and to live with them in the Matron's Cottage (Governor's Quarterly Report, March 31, 1873). From 1873 onward, the female employees ate all their meals in the Matron's Cottage. From 1873 to 1880, there was a mixed deposit from both the Steward and the female employees. After 1880, the deposit was solely from the female employees.

From an archaeological point of view, the trash deposits fall into two groupings: 1) pre-1870 and 2) the 1870-1900 deposit. The pre-1870 material probably is the garbage from the Steward and his wife, the Matron. The 1870 – 1890 deposits are primarily from the female employees although the Steward and his wife may have discarded some of the material between 1870 and 1880. For this analysis the data from the two trenches were not included in the comparisons of the Steward's deposit and the assemblage from the female employees.

The deposits in the two 19th-century trenches could be the Steward/Matron's trash, garbage from the workmen, or garbage from some other site within the Harbor. However, none of the artifacts from the trenches cross-mended with artifacts from the pre-1870 deposits or from the 1870-1900 deposits. None of the designs on the ceramics from the trenches had the same motifs as designs on ceramics from the pre-1870 or post-1870 deposits.

Archaeological Evidence

The archaeological data reveals important aspects of the women's lives: sanitation, health, diet, meals, and smoking.

Health and Sanitation

In the 19th century, housing for the working class was often substandard. American cities had numerous tenements teeming with people in small apartments without adequate sanitary facilities. Sailors' Snug Harbor, just a ferry ride from the crowded tenements in Manhattan, provided both the seamen and the staff with fresh sea breezes and lots of open space. During this time, some people believed that disease was transmitted by poisonous gases (miasmas) and that protection from these vapors was found in "plenty of sunlight, air, and dryness" (Mrozowski, Ziesing, and Beaudry 1996: 56).

The Matron's Cottage was a structure that addressed these health needs. As noted earlier, the building now known as the Matron's Cottage was actually a large brick building divided into two apartments. The female employees living at the Matron's Cottage enjoyed large, bright, well-ventilated quarters. Large windows throughout the building provided both air and light. Windows on all four sides provided good cross-ventilation. The rooms for the women were also spacious. The Matron's bedroom (18 ft. 4 in. by 11 ft.) was quite large (Governor's Quarterly Report 1872). In contrast, at a boarding house at Boott Mills "six women had to share a room measuring 14 ft. by 16 ft." (Mrozowski, Ziesing, and Beaudry 1996: 51). This small boarding house bedroom is in dramatic contrast to the female employees' bedroom at the Matron's



Figure 9: Wall Profile of one of the excavation units at the Matron's Cottage. A ceramic drain line (circa 1860s) is in the lower left side of the unit (Photo: Sherene Baugher).

Cottage (34 ft. 8 in. by 18 ft.) shared by the three laundresses and a cook (Governor's Quarterly Report 1872). This Matron's Cottage bedroom contained 626.4 sq. ft. for four women (156.6 sq. ft. for each woman) versus the very limited space in the Boott Mills boarding house of only 224 sq. ft. for six women (37.3 sq. ft. for each woman). The women in the Boott Mills boarding houses had the costs of room and board deducted from their salaries (Mrozowski, Ziesing, and Beaudry 1996: 4). In contrast, the women in the Matron's Cottage received housing and food as part of their compensation.

While the Matron's Cottage was located in the service area of Snug Harbor, near the laundry and shops, there was still open space around the women's home. Thomas Melville added lots of trees, paths, and other landscaping details throughout Snug Harbor (Governor's Quarterly Report 1871 and 1872). The greenery and open space must have seemed a respite compared to the crowded living conditions for urban factory workers.

Providing adequate fresh air and sunlight were not the only concerns for healthy living conditions. By the 1860s, health reformers had major concerns regarding sanitation. Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of New York City's Central Park, was a member of the U.S. Sanitary Commission during the Civil War (Roper 1973). After the war, Olmsted proposed plans for improving sanitation on Staten Island through a massive construction of sewer lines, but the plan was too costly (Rybczynski 1999: 305). Health reformers in other cities proposed similar plans. However, it took decades for the sanitary improvements to reach the homes and apartments of the working class. For example, in the boarding houses at Boott Mills, in Lowell, Massachusetts, it wasn't until 1890 that the city ordered "all privies to be abandoned and replaced by water closets hooked up to sewer lines" (Mrozowski, Ziesing, and Beaudry 1996: 52). Despite this order, the archaeologists found that the privies at Boott Mills were not filled until at least 1910, "twenty years after the city demanded that it be done" (Mrozowski, Ziesing, and Beaudry 1996: 52-53). The archaeologists also noted that the drinking water for these Boott Mills boarding houses was unsanitary because the wells were placed too close to the privies and the well

water became contaminated (Mrozowski, Ziesing, and Beaudry 1996: 53). The women in the boarding houses had to haul in the water from the well for washing themselves and "even in the early 20th century bathing facilities were nonexistent" (Mrozowski, Ziesing, and Beaudry 1996: 55).

The conditions for the working-class women at Snug Harbor were markedly different. In 1866, the year before Melville became Governor, water closets were installed in the Matron's Cottage (Greene Street Collection, Box 33, file 13). In 1867 and 1868, Melville arranged for water lines and sewer lines to be connected to all the buildings at Sailors' Snug Harbor (Governor's Quarterly Report, March 1868). He continued to have bathrooms and water closets placed in the remaining residential buildings (Governor's Quarterly Report, March 1868). The clay drain pipelines unearthed at the Matron's Cottage are archaeological evidence of these early amenities. The female employees at Snug Harbor enjoyed safe drinking water and the amenities of indoor plumbing 40 years before the women in the boarding houses at Boott Mills. In terms of sanitation, Snug Harbor was also years ahead of the neighboring Staten Island community of New Brighton, which installed sewer lines only in 1893 (Anon. 1893: 50). Snug Harbor also provided sanitary facilities decades ahead of working-class homes in New York City. Between the 1850s and 1870s, the city slowly installed sewer lines in Manhattan streets but it was the property owner's responsibility to install the connecting lines (Geismar 1993: 61-62). Not surprisingly, for decades the owners of tenement buildings did not install connecting lines. Until the late 19th century, working-class New York City residents were still using privies (Cantwell and Wall 2001: 252).

The archaeologists who excavated the backyards of the Boott Mill boarding houses found that there was evidence of rats (rat bones) and evidence of rats having gnawed on food bones discarded in the yard (Mrozowski, Ziesing, and Beaudry 1996: 53). No rat bones were found at the Matron's Cottage. The faunal assemblage was small partly because of Sailors' Snug Harbor's policy of collecting discarded animal bones and selling them (Greene Street Collection 1875). In addition to

the sanitary aspect of collecting the bones, the Sailors' Snug Harbor Cash Books from 1884-1895 reveal that the institution was actually making a profit from the sale of these bones (Greene Street Collection 1884-1895). In the 19th century, animal bones were processed for animal feed, fertilizer, and glue (Morgan 1987: 128).

Diet

While the environmental conditions were superior, the diet of the female employees at the Matron's Cottage was similar to the diet of the women in the boarding houses at Boott Mills, at least in variety, though perhaps not in quantity. In the boarding houses, meals included beef, chicken, goat, pork, and mutton (Mrozowski, Ziesing, and Beaudry 1996: 63). Archaeologist Kate Morgan studied the faunal collection from the Matron's Cottage and she concluded that the women were eating primarily mutton (60%) with some chicken (32%) and occasional pork (5%) and beef (1%), but she cautioned that this sample could be skewed because of the active collection of animal bones at Snug Harbor (Morgan 1987: 118-119). Snug Harbor raised sheep but the Steward always purchased large quantities of additional meat (beef, pork, poultry, and even mutton) for the institution (Greene Street Collection, Steward's Records). The meals were prepared for the retired seamen and the staff who ate in the employee dining halls.

The female employees originally ate in the staff dining hall. This changed in 1873 when the women began to take their meals in the Matron's Cottage. In 1872, Melville had the women's side of the Matron's Cottage renovated. In December 1872, the work was completed and the women had a new spacious kitchen (22 ft. 4 in. by 18 ft.) with a large range, a "hot water boiler," and a sink with water and sewer connections (Governors Quarterly Report, December 1872). Snug Harbor also employed a cook for the Matron's Cottage (Matron's Records 1873-1890). The institution continued to supply the food for the Matron's Cottage, but in 1877 the Matron requested additional food supplies. Melville suggested that the Board give the Matron a food allowance to purchase this additional food (Governor's Quarterly Report, December 1877). It is not clear from the existing records if

she ever received the food allowance but it is probable that Melville's request was granted. If the Matron's Cottage faunal assemblage is a representative sample of what the women ate, it is not clear if it represents economic choices, institutional purchases, or the women's own food preferences. The women at the Matron's Cottage were from diverse ethnic backgrounds including Irish, English, Dutch, and German, so the food choices probably do not reflect a particular ethnic preference (Matron's Records 1873-1900).

The Matron's Cottage faunal assemblage deposited by the Steward and his family also shows a varied diet but with different proportions of meat and poultry, with beef (45%) comprising the largest category followed by pork (25%), mutton (22%), and poultry (6%) (Morgan 1987: 119). The Steward and the other institutional administrators were expected to pay for their own food. In fact, in 1872 Melville was accused of using milk, bread, and poultry purchased by the institution for meals in his own home and he was forced to reimburse Snug Harbor for this food (Shepherd 1979: 23).

Dining and Ceramics

Archaeologically, there are noticeable differences in the ceramics from the Steward and female employees' assemblages. For this study, the ceramic wares were divided into three groups: 1) decorated dinnerware; 2) undecorated dinnerware; and 3) utilitarian wares such as bowls, storage jars, and baking pans. During the period (1845-1870) when only the Steward and his family were eating at the Matron's Cottage, 41% of the dinnerware was decorated (either transfer-printed whitewares or Chinese porcelain). The Chinese porcelain may have been used for tea service. One of the transfer-printed whiteware designs is a scene of New York Harbor with Staten Island in the background (FIG. 10). After 1870, only 17% of the dinnerware was decorated. It must be noted that some of the post-1870 decorated wares may be attributed to the Steward's residency (1870-1880) and that the actual percentage used by the female employees may be even lower than 17%, thus making the differences in the two deposits even more pronounced. When the women's side of the house was renovated in 1872, the new dining room (18 ft. 4 in. by

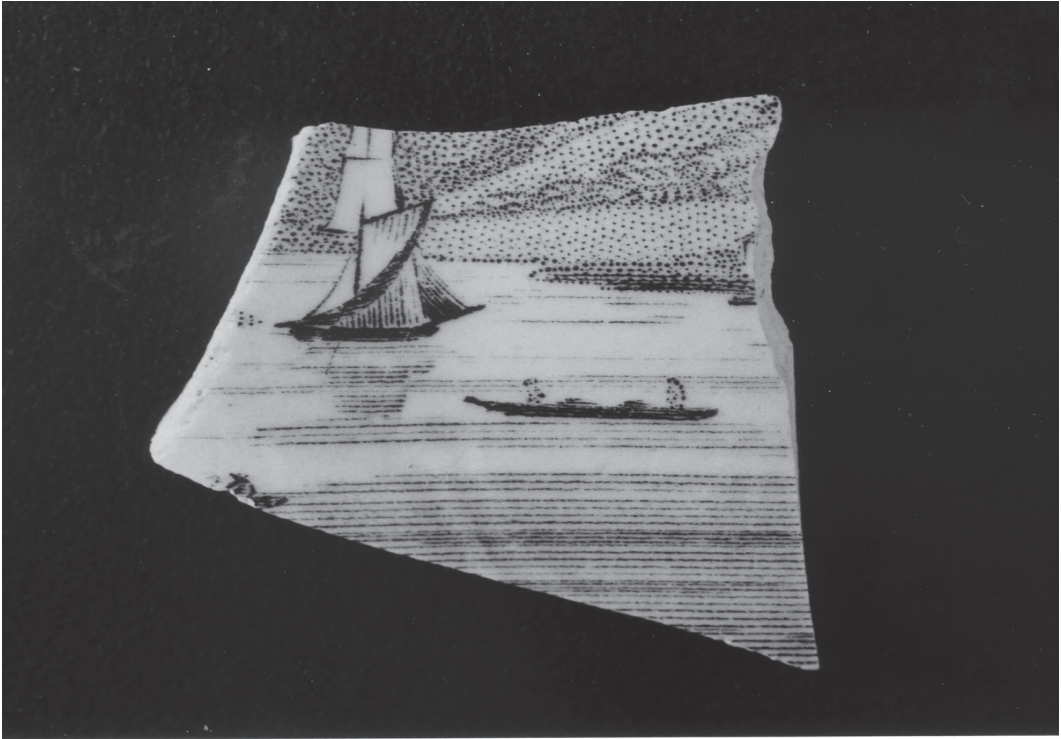


Figure 10: Black transfer-printed whiteware with a scene of New York harbor (Photo: Carl Forster).

12 ft. 6 in.) had a built in cabinet with glass doors to hold their “crocker” (Governor’s Quarterly Report, December 1872). It seems that the institution was probably providing the dishes. Photographs of the seamen’s dining hall show undecorated white dinner service (Shepherd 1979).

When the deposits are compared to the boarding houses at Boott Mills, there are both similarities and differences. At the Boott Mills boarding houses, one-third of the dishes were undecorated, while the decorated dishes were mismatched patterns and did not represent sets of dishes (Mrozowski, Ziesing, and Beaudry 1996: 61-62). At the Matron’s Cottage, the women primarily used inexpensive undecorated heavy ironstone plates (“hotel china”) and had a few mismatched transfer-printed dishes in diverse patterns and colors (blue, red, black, brown, and green). The assemblage also contained some older dishes (shell-edged wares and pearlwares) that may represent older plates sold as remainders.

Smoking

American attitudes toward smoking changed in the 19th century. By the mid-19th century, middle-class and upper-class men who had smoked long-stemmed clay pipes switched to briar pipes and then to more expensive meerschaum pipes or cigars (Bradley 2000). By the 1850s, “the very image of the clay pipe came to symbolize the day laborer and workingman” (Reckner 2001: 105). Smoking also changed for women. By the middle of the 19th century, smoking was considered improper for upper-class and middle-class women (Mrozowski et al 1996: 68). Lower-class women ignored these mores and continued to smoke in public and in private (Cook 1997: 29). Therefore, in the Matron’s Cottage assemblage there should be evidence of smoking among the working-class female employees. The extant documents contain no reference to a policy either allowing or prohibiting males from visiting female employees. Therefore, it is also possible that gentlemen callers left some of the pipes.

The total clay smoking pipe assemblage (215 artifacts) included 83 pipe bowls and 132 pipe stem fragments. In the period 1845-1870, there were very few smoking pipe remains -- only 7% of the collection. In this early period, only four pipe bowls were found: two undecorated bowls, one with a leaf decoration along the seam and one fluted pipe bowl. One stem had a fluted design and may have been the stem to the fluted pipe bowl. The other 11 stem fragments were undecorated. Perhaps this is because the female employees carefully discarded their pipes because half of the residence was still occupied by the Steward.

The overwhelming majority of the pipes (93% of the collection) was found in the levels dating 1870-1890 and these pipe fragments probably represent women's smoking habits (FIG. 11). Of the 79 pipe bowls that date from the period 1870-1890, 47 bowls were decorated

(60%) and 32 were undecorated (40%). There were 120 pipe stems and eight were decorated (6%) including two Peter Dorni pipe stems. Peter Dorni was a French pipe maker producing pipes from ca. 1850 to ca. 1880 (Walker 1983: 32). Competing pipe companies in Holland, Scotland, and Germany produced Dorni-style pipes (Walker 1983: 33).

Of the 47 decorated pipe bowls, 23 were fluted bowls (49 % of the decorated pipe bowls assemblage). Fluted design pipe bowls were very popular in the 19th century and were made by "virtually all pipe manufacturers" (Reid 1994: 83). Floral and botanical designs were also popular motifs on pipe bowls at this time (Oswald 1975: 110). A few of the Matron's Cottage pipe bowls had botanical motifs including designs of vines (1), leaves (3), and ropes (4). One partial pipe bowl had part of a human face with a beard. Effigy pipe bowls

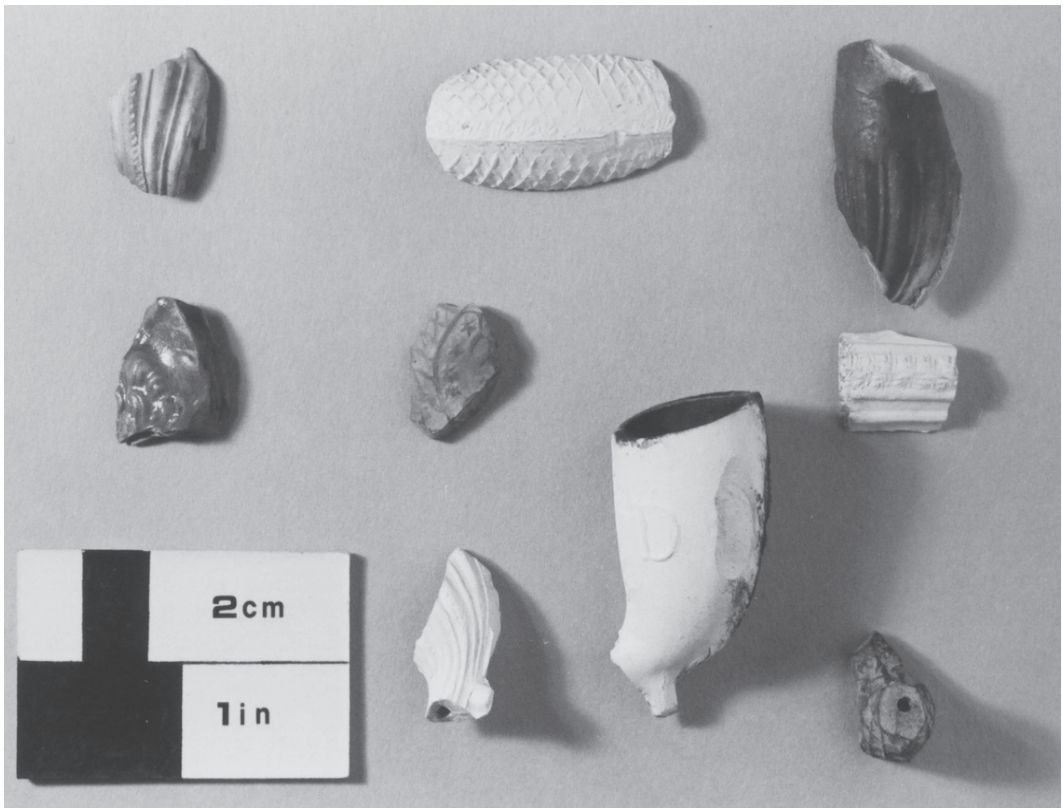


Figure 11: Used clay smoking pipe bowls from the Matron's Cottage. The far-left bowl fragment in the middle line is the only glazed pipe fragment, and it depicts a beard on a human face. Some of the pipe bowls are discolored (Photo: Carl Forster).

were made to commemorate United States presidents but also depicted ordinary men and women (Bradley 2000: 110 and 114).

Five bowls (11% of the decorated bowls) had the T.D. design. T.D. pipes were originally produced in the 1750s by Thomas Dormer in London, but throughout the 19th century they were manufactured by numerous pipe companies in the British Isles and in Canada (Walker 1983: 36-39). In the 19th century, T.D. pipes are found throughout North America (Reid 1994: 85). An additional nine bowl fragments had various designs with stars, and three fragments with cross-hatching with stars may have been the highly decorated side of a T.D. pipe. T.D. pipes with stars and cross-hatching first became popular during the War of 1812 and continued in popularity through the middle of the 19th century (Reid 1976: 3).

The pipes with stars may reflect patriotic motifs. Archaeologist Paul Reckner (2001) studied patriotic symbols on American clay smoking pipes. In a pipe assemblage of 153 pipes from a site in the immigrant Five Points neighborhood in Manhattan, Paul Reckner found 20% of the pipe bowls had patriotic designs with eagles, the Great Seal of the United States, and T.D. pipes with a circular pattern of thirteen stars (Reckner 2001: 105). Reckner (2001: 109) noted that trade unionists used patriotic themes to reinforce their patriotism while advocating for better working conditions for their members. Reckner (2001: 109) suggested that these patriotic-themed smoking pipes might be associated with individuals' participation in trade unions. He further suggested that these pipes might indicate the desire by some Irish and German immigrants to assimilate into mainstream American society (Reckner 2001: 111). It is also possible that these pipes commemorated the Civil War in which many Irish served. In terms of the Matron's Cottage assemblage, the 13 bowls (the nine pipe bowls fragments with stars and the four T.D. pipes with stars) represent 28% of the decorated pipe bowl assemblage. If they are considered a patriotic-themed group, then they constitute a similar percentage to the 20% of patriotic-themed pipes found by Reckner at one of the Five Points sites.

During the period 1873-1890, at least a quarter of the women in the Matron's Cottage

had Irish surnames such as Gleason and Murphy, yet we found no smoking pipes with Irish designs. The lack of Irish smoking pipes and the presence of patriotic American pipes may suggest that the Irish female employees may have wanted to appear more like their English, German, and Dutch co-workers. It may also indicate that these women with Irish surnames were not recent immigrants and perhaps were American-born women of Irish ancestry who were less politically affiliated with Irish politics than Irish-American men or recent immigrants.

The absence of Irish-themed pipes contrasts with the boardinghouses at Boott Mills where five Irish-designed pipe bowls were found (Cook 1997: 26-28). Even so, these five pipes account for only 2% of the whole Boott Mills boarding house collection of 226 clay smoking pipe bowls and bowl fragments. By comparison, in a small assemblage of 13 pipes at a Five Points site, Reckner found three pipes (23%) with Irish designs and he suggests that this might indicate that some Irish residents felt comfortable with asserting their Irish heritage (Reckner 2001: 11). Irish designs on smoking pipes have also been found in small numbers at 19th-century working-class archaeological sites in Paterson, New Jersey (Reckner 2004) and in Buffalo, New York (Peña and Denmon 2000). Among the male residents at Sailors' Snug Harbor, the archaeological assemblage associated with the sailors' dormitories contained 65 clay smoking pipe bowls and 77 pipe stems, but only 3% of the assemblage (two pipe bowls) had Irish designs (Cotz 1984). The two pipe bowls had "Home Rule" engraved on them. This Irish nationalist slogan became very popular in the late 1840s and "Home Rule" pipes also appeared in the 1880s and 1890s (Reckner 2004: 252 and 254).

Conclusion

The archaeological assemblage reflects the known economic differences between the Steward and the female employees. The Matron and the female employees had modest salaries and the institution supplied at least some of their household goods and probably most of their food. Given the major salary differences, it is not surprising that the household of these low-ranking female employees would

have had less variety than the higher status household of the Steward.

The archaeological record shows that there was great similarity in the ceramics associated with the female employees at the Matron's Cottage and the female factory workers living in the Boott Mills company boarding houses in Lowell, Massachusetts. While it is impossible to determine if the women at the Matron's Cottage consumed more food than their counterparts at Boott Mills, some differences are apparent. Both groups had variety in their diet but the women at the Matron's Cottage appear to have consumed more mutton. Remarkably, the Matron's Cottage assemblage contained no fish bones, clam shells, or oyster shells even though New York Bay and the waters around Staten Island could have provided ample supplies of these seafoods. Clam and oyster shells were found in the archaeological assemblage associated with the sailors' at Snug Harbor, so this seafood was available at Snug Harbor (Cotz 1984). Since clams and oysters were an inexpensive source of protein (Kurlansky 2006) the absence of these shells may indicate food preferences on part of the women at the Matron's Cottage.

This study reveals diversity in the living conditions of single working-class women residing in institution-owned or company-owned housing. While both groups of women had modest incomes and material goods that reflected their limited purchasing power, there were differences in environmental comforts. The women at Boott Mills lived in houses with privies, rats in the backyard, and contaminated water in their wells. At the Matron's Cottage, the women had a bright, airy, well-ventilated home with spacious bedrooms, bathtubs, water closets, and piped water in the house. Their building was connected to water and sewer lines in the 1860s. These amenities were unusual in 19th-century buildings that housed members of the working class. While the daily work was demanding and at times tedious for both groups of women, the female employees in the Matron's Cottage returned from their work to a far more inviting environment. The women in the Matron's Cottage were afforded comfortable living quarters in their own separate "snug harbor."

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