

Northeast Historical Archaeology

Volume 38

Article 3

2009

Patriots, Tories, Inebriates, and hussies: The Historical Archaeology of the Abraham Staats House, as a Case Study in Microhistory

Richard Veit

Michael J. Gall

Follow this and additional works at: <http://orb.binghamton.edu/neha>

 Part of the [Archaeological Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Veit, Richard and Gall, Michael J. (2009) "Patriots, Tories, Inebriates, and hussies: The Historical Archaeology of the Abraham Staats House, as a Case Study in Microhistory," *Northeast Historical Archaeology*: Vol. 38 38, Article 3.
<https://doi.org/10.22191/neha/vol38/iss1/3> Available at: <http://orb.binghamton.edu/neha/vol38/iss1/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). It has been accepted for inclusion in Northeast Historical Archaeology by an authorized editor of The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). For more information, please contact ORB@binghamton.edu.

Patriots, Tories, Inebriates, and hussies: The Historical Archaeology of the Abraham Staats House, as a Case Study in Microhistory

Cover Page Footnote

This paper was improved by the comments of two anonymous reviewers. We appreciate the help shown by Sue Maguire as she shepherded it through the editorial process. This project was made possible by generous grants from the New Jersey Historic Trust, Somerset County Historic Trust, and the unflagging support of the Friends of the Abraham Staats House. A special thanks to Kathy and Tom Ormosi, Kathy and Brian Faulks, Bob Gaudio, Kells Swan, and Tom D'Amico for their assistance. Our colleagues and former colleagues at Monmouth University, particularly Gerard P. Scharfenberger and Bill Schindler, who co-directed field-schools at the site are also thanked as are Allison Gall, Adam Heinrich, and our students and volunteers who assisted with the fieldwork.

Patriots, Tories, Inebriates, and Hussies: The Historical Archaeology of the Abraham Staats House, as a Case Study in Microhistory

Richard Veit and Michael J. Gall

To modern suburbanites, life on a farm may seem hopelessly boring or, alternatively, charming and idyllic. Excavations at the Abraham Staats House in New Jersey's Raritan Valley, just upriver from New Brunswick, provide a revealing glimpse of the dynamic and contentious lives of 18th- and 19th-century farmers. The Staats family, part of the early 18th-century Dutch migration to the Raritan Valley, saw their lives transformed by the Revolutionary War, the arrival of turnpike roads, the construction of the Delaware and Raritan Canal, the emancipation of slaves, the growth of the temperance movement, and family squabbles of Shakespearean proportions. Excavations at the Staats House undertaken by volunteers from the Friends of the Abraham Staats House, the Archaeological Society of New Jersey, and Monmouth University, combined with the rediscovery of long-forgotten diaries, deeds, wills, and court records, provide a richer glimpse into the complex realities of rural life in early New Jersey. Through the detailed intensive study, or microhistory, of this single household, local, regional, and national historical trends are revealed.

La vie sur une ferme peut avoir l'air, aux yeux des banlieusards modernes, d'un ennui total ou, au contraire, tout à fait charmante et idyllique. Des fouilles menées à la maison Abraham Staats dans la vallée Raritan dans l'état du New Jersey—située en amont de la ville de New Brunswick—offre un coup d'œil révélateur sur la vie dynamique et controversée des fermiers des 18^{ième} et 19^{ième} siècles. Les membres de la famille Staats—une famille ayant fait partie de la migration Néerlandaise vers la vallée Raritan au début du 18^{ième} siècle—ont vu leur vie transformée par la guerre de l'Indépendance, l'apparition des autoroutes, la construction des canaux Delaware et Raritan, l'émancipation des esclaves, l'expansion du mouvement antialcoolisme et les querelles familiales aux proportions shakespeariennes. Les fouilles à la maison Staats ont été menées par des bénévoles de l'association coopérante Friends of the Abraham Staats House, de la société archéologique du New Jersey et de l'université Monmouth. Les résultats de ces fouilles combinés à la redécouverte de journaux intimes, d'actes notariés, de testaments et de procès-verbaux offrent un riche aperçu des réalités complexes de la vie rurale au New Jersey à cette époque. L'étude détaillée et intensive—ou la micro-histoire—de cette maisonnée révèle des tendances historiques locales, régionales et nationales.

Introduction

Historical archaeologists study the archaeological remains of the modern (post-1492) world (Schuyler 1978; Leone and Potter 1999; Hall and Silliman 2006; Hicks and Beaudry 2006). Using material, written, oral, and visual sources, they strive to understand how individuals once lived their lives and what their experiences can tell us about larger patterns of culture. From these small things forgotten (Deetz 1977), they endeavor to reveal the workings of past societies and strive to produce what Tarlow (1999) and West (1999) have called “theoretically informed and inclusive accounts of the recent past.” Historical archaeology is particularly effective at revealing the lives of those whom history forgot, as well as expanding our knowledge of important but poorly documented topics

such as illicit activities, issues related to health and hygiene, the age of exploration, and the evolution of landscapes over time (Deagan 1991). Other archaeologists have seen historical archaeology as the archaeology of capitalism (Orser 1995; Leone and Potter 1999; Wilkie and Bartoy 2000) and even as a way to reveal and perhaps ameliorate class conflict (McGuire, Saitta, and Duke 1998). More recently, many historical archaeologists have taken to interpretive and narrative approaches (Beaudry 1996; Wilkie 2003; De Cunzo 2004; King 2006; Yamin 2008). A few have explicitly pointed out the connections between historical archaeology and microhistory (Walton, Brooks, and DeCorse 2008: 3-14).

This narrative case study in historical archaeology or microhistory examines the challenges and successes of a Dutch-American family, the Staatses of South Bound Brook,

New Jersey during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Staats family arrived in New Jersey as part of a wave of Dutch migration into the Raritan Valley in the early 18th century. In what might be described as Forrest Gumpian fashion, the family was touched by many of the major events and trends of their time. Issues of political allegiance, gender, slaveholding, education, farmland exhaustion, marriage, inheritance, and temperance, ultimately divided the family, pitting brother against sister, and father against daughter. Yet the story of this intriguing family would have been all but lost if not for archaeology, which provided a catalyst for a deep historical examination of the Staats family. In this case study we argue that through the close examination of archaeological sites and their associated households, historical archaeology can make a significant contribution to a more nuanced understanding of a complicated past. Such an approach highlights individual actors who pursued their own goals while being both constrained and enabled by broader social and economic movements that shaped their agency (see Darnton 1985), and ultimately can cast local history in a new light that both informs and engages the public.

Project Background

This study, and the narrative that follows, is based on an archaeological project at the Abraham Staats house directed by Richard Veit and Michael Gall between 2004 and 2006 (Veit and Gall 2005, 2007; Gall and Veit 2009). The project was supported by the Friends of the Abraham Staats House and the Borough of South Bound Brook, who saw fit to encourage an archaeological study of the site as part of the structure's restoration and ended up with considerably more information than they had bargained for. Funding from the New Jersey Historic Trust, Somerset County Historic Trust, and Friends of the Abraham Staats House supported the archaeological fieldwork and historical research.

Rather than present the results of this project as a descriptive archaeological report, we present it here as a narrative told, in part, by Isaac Staats, the youngest child of Abraham and Margaret Staats, the homeowners most closely associated with the house. Although many historical archaeologists have opted to

present their work through the invented voices of long dead narrators (Deetz 1977, 1993, Ferguson 1992, Gibb 2000; Wilkie 2003; Yamin 2008); others have decried this approach, considering it a gimmick and unscientific. We disagree, all archaeological interpretations are contingent. Whether they write in the first person or the third person, archaeologists are analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing collected information with varying levels of veracity about the past (see Hicks and Beaudry 2006: 61-64; Fagan 2006). Historical archaeologists, working with material, visual, oral, and written sources, are in a better position than many other archaeologists to recount the lives of past individuals. Indeed, this ability to personify the past and the connections between past and present are two factors that make historical archaeology so compelling.

In the case of the Staats house and its former residents, we were blessed with an extraordinarily rich collection of primary documents from an upper middle class family. These records are housed in a variety of repositories, including the New Jersey Historical Society, Special Collections and Archives at Rutgers University, and the descendants of the Staats family—copies of which are held by the authors and the Friends of the Abraham Staats House. Extensive research has identified late 18th- and early 19th-century school ledgers, account books, diaries, letters, poetry, recipes, election returns, samplers, mourning pictures, drawings, and paintings. There is also an extensive collection of household furnishings—desks, a Dutch kas, mirrors, a tall case clock made by Isaac Brokaw, shoe buckles, paintings, and even daguerreotypes of some of the individuals discussed here. The expected legal documents, wills, inventories, maps, and property deeds and mortgages also survive. One mortgage, four probate inventories, six wills, and 37 deeds connected to the original Staats farmstead were examined (Gall and Veit 2009). Of these, one mortgage, three wills, and 22 deeds directly involved Isaac Staats. Perhaps most importantly, the transcripts of eight lawsuit documents involving Isaac Staats, totaling over 176 pages, give voice to the inhabitants of the Staats house (New Jersey Chancery Court [NJCC] 1846, 1848a, 1848b; New Jersey Court of Errors and Appeals

[NJCEA] 1846, 1849, 1851, 1854, 1856). These lawsuits provide extraordinarily detailed descriptions of the interactions of the house's inhabitants. Conflicting accounts of events, common to every lawsuit, were crosschecked against all of the lawsuits and other documents including deeds, wills, mortgages, and census records.

These sources have been woven together into a narrative presented from the perspective of Isaac Staats. The obvious question is, why Isaac? As will soon be apparent, he was a troubled and troubling individual. Why not one of the slaves or servants, or one of Isaac's sisters, his daughter Margaret, his son-in-law Reuben, his second wife Maria? No doubt each of them saw and experienced the story told here differently. Certainly some of them would have made more sympathetic protagonists. Indeed, one is struck by how different their voices and perspectives are from those seen in the contemporary Raritan Valley diary of Rachel Van Dyke published by the University of Pennsylvania Press (McMahon and Schriver 2000). Young Rachel was interested in education, friendship, and religion. In contrast, the Staats women were consumed with issues of inheritance, farm management, and appropriate behavior.

Isaac was selected for several pragmatic reasons. First, Isaac's trouble managing the farm and his remarriage in 1840 to a woman less than half his age precipitated the lawsuits that provide detailed evidence about the family during the mid-19th century. Isaac was the complainant or appellant in four of these cases and the defendant or respondent in others. Simply put, he is the most visible, controversial, and well-documented individual in these records. Second, although his sisters resided on the property longer, Isaac's behavior, and decisions resulted in the greatest impacts on the farmstead, albeit in both negative and positive ways. Third, the accounts and actions/reactions of other individuals connected to the farmstead are often documented in the context of Isaac's insoberity.

No doubt, the Staats sisters saw things quite differently. But reader don't despair, Isaac does not have the last word. To give voice to Isaac's siblings, the authors have supplied a rejoinder, written under the guise

of Phebe Staats that reflects, based on the available documentation, how the Staats' sisters viewed their prodigal younger brother.

The Narrative of Issac Staats

It was hard to believe it had come to this. Here he was, Isaac Staats, the only son of the famous Abraham Staats, duped out of his family's home by his ungrateful daughter Margaret and her lying husband Reuben Freeman, or so he later argued (NJCEA 1854: 814-885). Now he was living in rented rooms above an Irish hatter in Bound Brook, selling his labor to men who had once bowed low to his father (NJCEA 1854: 838). His young wife was reduced to sleeping on a pallet on the rough kitchen floor next to the servants (NJCEA 1854: 867). How it had come to this was quite a tale.

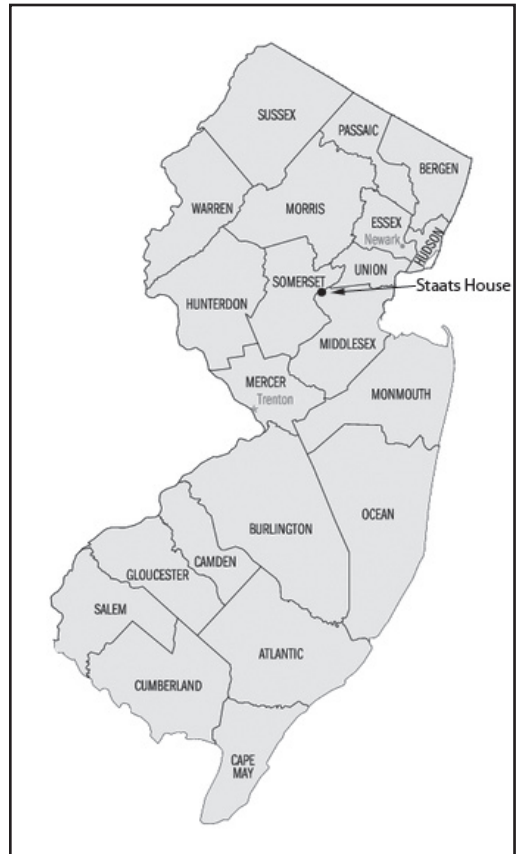


Figure 1. Map of New Jersey showing the location of the Abraham Staats house.

The Staats plantation, Isaac's family's farm, once stretched inland from the Raritan River covering nearly 300 fertile acres (FIGS. 1 AND 2). In 1738, Isaac's great-grandfather, Peter Staats, had purchased the property from Cornelia Beekman of New York. This was during a period when Dutch settlers flooded the Raritan Valley (HBA/HS 2002: IV-4). The property passed first to his great uncle Hendrik and, in 1769 (Somerset County Clerks Office 1769), to Isaac's grandfather John who, almost immediately, gave it to his recently married son Abraham and his new wife Margaret DuBois. Hendrik had not been much of a farmer and was often in court being sued for debts and trespass. However, Abraham, Isaac's late father, well, that was a different story (FIG. 4).

Everything Abraham tried his hand at turned to gold. His farm prospered, he married well, and he owned enough land to bequeath to his children at his death. He taught math and surveying (HBA/HS 2002: IV-5). He was the Commissioner of the Loan Office for Somerset County and a Justice of the Peace (Schleicher and Winter 1999: 92). Though some of his friends chose to support the British, particularly in the trying fall of 1776, he did not. For this, he and his neighbor, Hendrik Fisher, were prohibited from participating in the general amnesty the British offered their wayward subjects in 1776; an amnesty that so many lukewarm patriots took (Schleicher and Winter 1999: 92). How distraught this made him. Abraham even scribbled some doggerel verse about these traitors.

When justice cries for vengeance on her foe.
The guilty to another country go.
They here in safety place an anxious hope.
To scape a prison and sometimes a rope.
New Jersey being hospitably great.
Endangered culprits hurry to the state.

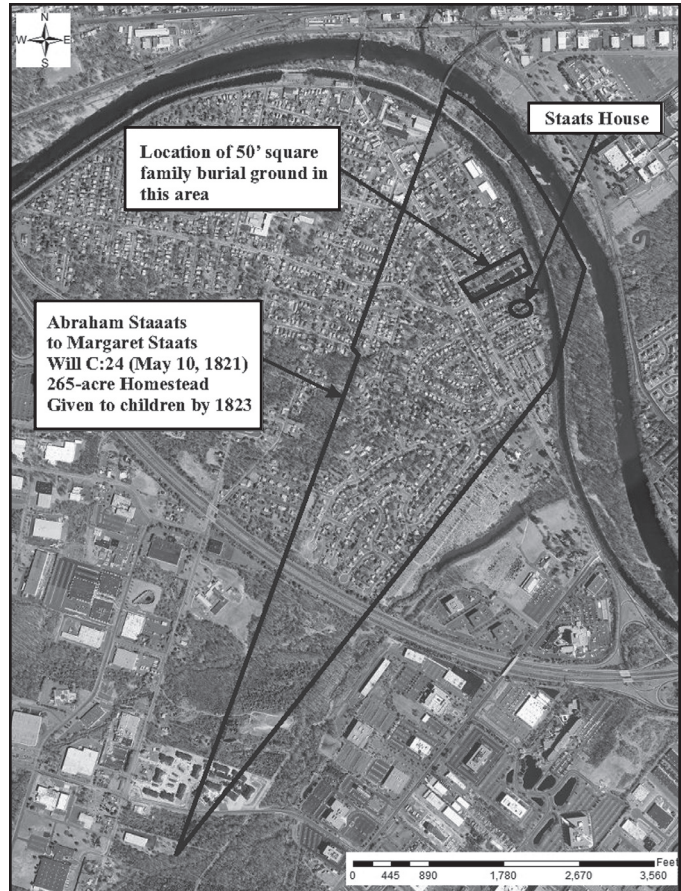


Figure 2. The undivided Staats Property in South Bound Brook, Somerset County, New Jersey. (Mapping by Michael J. Gall, based on the 2002 United States Geological Survey New Jersey Digital Ortho Quarter Quad Aerial Photography.)

They seem reposed affect tranquility.
Their guilt lays dormant with impunity.
But pride the bain (sic) of every feeble mind.
Soon shows that they to meanness are inclined.
Selfish conceited but with all a FOOL
Forward officious dumb as any MULE
(A. Staats c. 1776).

The Raritan Valley was a dangerous place to be a patriot, and in April of 1777 Abraham fled his house as British raiders approached. They ransacked the farmstead, stealing a cow, five calves, and some wearing apparel (Davis 1895: 26).

Abraham was not the only politically engaged member of the household. One of the family slaves, Jack, ironically nicknamed Tory Jack, may have spied on the British in nearby New Brunswick (Barth 2002: 67). Or, perhaps he was spying for the British on Abraham himself.



Figure 3. The Abraham Staats House, c. 1936. (HABS NJ, 18 BOUBS, 1-1.)

During those trying times it was so hard to determine where individual's loyalties lay.

What a relief it was when the American General Baron Von Steuben decided to use the farmstead as his headquarters during the Middlebrook encampment (Somerset County Historical Quarterly [SCHQ] 1913). Finally, the family again felt safe. His stay was even memorable to Isaac's sisters, just girls at the time, who were impressed with the General's elegant manners, dashing uniform, and the glittering medals awarded by the King of Prussia. On a desk in the home's front room, the General had laid down the rules that would help transform the ragtag American army into a formidable force. The General stayed with the family the whole spring of 1778. He and his aides took over half the house, requiring the front and back room for their work. Abraham, of course, obliged their request, providing the Baron with a room to sleep, and granted the General's men a space in the orchard to erect a marquee (Carter 1913: 6).

This had all occurred before Isaac was born, yet he had heard the stories dozens of times. One memorable account recalled a visit in May of 1778 by the Spanish Minister Don Juan De Miralles and the French Minister to America Conrad Girard for a day of grand entertainment at the house. The ministers were accompanied by roughly 60 officers, including Generals Washington, Knox, and Greene, Baron Johannes DeKalb, and William Alexander Lord Sterling (SCHQ 1913: 80-87). Those were heady days indeed.

After the encampment, the Baron and his soldiers left, and dangerous times returned to the valley. In 1782, when the Queens Rangers again raided the Raritan Valley, a New Brunswick merchant hid his stock beneath the floor of the Staats' barn. Fortunately, the soldiers did not find his goods. In gratitude, he later presented Mrs. Staats with porcelain figures of Milton and Minerva (Bailey 1968: 445). They still sat on the mantle by the cupboard Martha Washington once admired.

Following the war, Abraham served as an appraiser, adjusting claims for property losses Americans suffered in the county during the Revolution (Bailey 1968: 455). He sat at the same desk Von Steuben used, a desk that still occupied the space beneath the home's rear chamber window. There, by the ticking of a fine case clock crafted by Rahway clockmaker, Isaac Brokaw, he made his notations and calculations. What a contrast that tall clock made with the fine Dutch kas in the hall. Father Abraham was both an educated

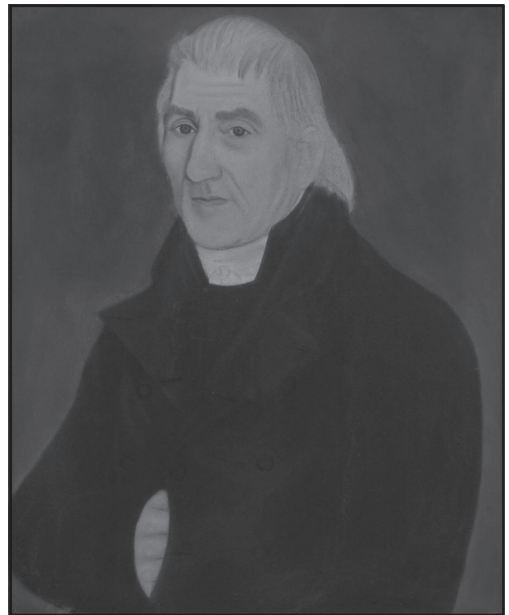


Figure 4, Abraham Staats, c. 1818, by Micah Williams. (Courtesy of the Friends of the Abraham Staats House.)

modern man, and a frugal Dutch farmer. In his ledgers, Abraham kept strict account of his farm, labor expenses, income, barter exchanges, and loans. The farm was well-managed, befitting Abraham's station in life as a well-to-do farmer. It would seem he had it all: land, wealth, status, and health.

There was only one disappointment. Abraham, like the biblical patriarch of old, and his wife Margaret DuBois had no sons despite the regularity with which infants arrived: Jane in 1773, Phebe in 1775, Margaret and Catherine in 1779, Mary in 1784, Sarah in 1787, and Magdaline in 1789. Two of his beloved daughters, Catherine and Magdaline had died in infancy, but the rest survived and thrived.¹ Abraham doted on his daughters. He taught them to figure like accountants, write like scribes, and argue like lawyers, preparing them to one day run the family farm if the unthinkable happened and one failed to marry and had to support herself. Yet Abraham understood that his daughters, as members of the rural upper middle class, needed to be elegant and refined to meet social expectations and appeal to potential suitors. The local academies and female seminaries were not good enough for his daughters. Instead, he sent them to finishing school in Philadelphia. There, his daughter Sarah completed a mourning picture of America at the Tomb of Washington, which Abraham proudly hung in his parlor. Sarah's sisters shared her intellectual and creative talents, having also learned to paint and sew. Each one prepared a sampler to display her skills. It seemed, after seven daughters, that Abraham would have no sons. Unlike some of their English contemporaries, few Dutch women had children after they turned forty (Fabend 1991: 45). Then, in 1791, when Abraham was 44 and his wife Margaret 42, a baby boy arrived. To those familiar with the Bible, the name was obvious; he must be called Isaac.

Isaac was raised in a comfortable but crowded home. In addition to his parents and five sisters, he shared the home with five slaves who labored as domestic servants and farm hands (Somerset County Surrogate's

Office [SCSO] 1821). He could remember the home so well. There was a hall and bedroom in the older portion of the house. The new addition contained a desperately needed dwelling room, a rear bed chamber, and a spacious kitchen wing. Mother had loved to entertain. Twenty-six chairs lined the walls and surrounded the table in the dwelling room, more than enough for the family and guests (SCSO 1821). In keeping with its elegance, the room also boasted a fine carpet. At night, slaves were kept out of sight, sleeping in the kitchen or the dark, cramped attic. Mother and father shared a large chamber with a beautiful canopied bed. Their room was also furnished with an old desk where father penned letters, a mirror, a carpet, the kas, and a storage chest. Isaac and his sisters shared the other two bedrooms.

Entering from the front, he could remember the parlor, the finest room in the house. Its corner fireplace provided warmth. Decorative tea sets were displayed on the shelves of a corner cupboard when not in use, along with silver teaspoons. Forks and knives were also kept here. A mirror and portraits of his mother and father painted by Micah Williams from New Brunswick adorned the walls. In contrast, the second floor of the house provided more space for sleeping quarters and storage for tools, foodstuffs, old furniture, and the like (SCSO 1821).

Their farm had once been one of the finest in the valley. Father had invested in the best tools he could afford, patent ploughs, a fanning mill (SCSO 1821). The farm was also well stocked with carriages and a variety of livestock, including half a dozen hogs, a sow, pigs, eighteen cattle, sheep, lambs, and horses (SCSO 1821).

For Isaac, it was hard living in the shadows of his talented sisters and successful father, a challenge he would never quite overcome. Sometimes he wanted to leave, but his father would not entertain the thought. In 1813, young Isaac married Martha Ross, and shortly thereafter they had their first and only child, Margaret, named in honor of her paternal grandmother (Cook 1958: 32). That child, once Isaac's pride, proved to be a sore trial indeed. Perhaps she spent too much time with her aunts. She, like them, was proud, a deadly sin. Young Margaret may have grown

¹ It was common for 30% of children to die in infancy or youth. Six of the eight children of Abraham and Margaret survived to adulthood (Fabend 1991:43).

tired of her father's impropriety and constant drunkenness. His alcoholism was evident as early as 1824, though it may have started earlier, coinciding with the deaths of his father and sister Margaret in 1821 and his mother in 1822 (NJCEA 1849: 516). The melancholy resulting from their loss and the stress of new responsibilities may have been too much for Isaac to bear.

In 1834, young Margaret married Reuben Freeman (NJCEA 1851: 495). Isaac couldn't imagine a poorer choice. Freeman was "a man with pretensions to education and respectability, but according to Isaac, entirely destitute of the means to support either himself or his wife" (NJCEA 1854: 814). He had briefly been a schoolteacher, and even more briefly a minister. He was so incompetent at farming that Isaac had to take his daughter and son-in-law into his own house and support them before finally establishing them on their own farm nearby (NJCEA 1854). Reuben and Margaret constantly needed money. They owed Isaac over \$1300 dollars², though Reuben contested the amount, accusing Isaac of false promises and miscalculating loans (NJCEA 1851: 496-499). Why were they so ungrateful?

Perhaps Isaac should have seen it coming. His sisters, smart and headstrong, didn't appreciate him. When their parents Abraham and Margaret died, they left the 265-acre farmstead to be divided with half of the old place going to Isaac and the remainder split up among his surviving sisters: Jane, Phebe, Margaret, Mary, and Sarah (SCSO 1821). The sisters had their own troubles. Sister Sarah married William Bayles in 1814. William had seemed like a good man and they had a daughter, Sarah, in 1815, but when William took to drinking, papa Abraham was appalled. He demanded that Sarah and her daughter, Margaret Ann, return home. In 1817 they did. Abraham left no room for reconciliation. In his will he wrote, "My daughter Sarah is to have an equal right with the others of my daughters, provided she remain separate from her husband William Bayles" (Cook 1965: 2). Sarah's daughter Margaret grew to womanhood on the farm and married her first cousin

Dr. George Bayles. In 1839, when she was only 24 years old and newly married with a baby on the way, her young husband shot himself. They said it was an accident from cleaning his gun (Cook 1965: 3). Isaac's older sister Margaret had not long survived her parents, dying in 1821. Isaac was the executor of her estate, but his sisters claimed he was incompetent because of his constant intoxication and he was forced to relinquish the role in 1846 (NJCEA 1849: 513-516). Sister Jane married Joseph Doty, but he too died, and Jane with her daughter Elizabeth soon returned to the family homestead. Their family certainly experienced its share of tragedy.

Together, Isaac and his surviving sisters continued to live in their childhood home. His father's will had divided the land with half going to his sisters, an old Dutch custom. They had divided the farmhouse, with Isaac living in one half, and the sisters sharing the other. Isaac had tried to hold things together. He and Phebe managed the farm. She was so smart. Even as a child she had been papa's favorite. But it was hard to always answer to his sister. When the census taker came to the house, he put down two heads of household, Phebe and Isaac! When the Somerset County vigilance committee was formed to apprehend thieves, Phebe joined. Out of 41 members, she was the only woman (HBA/HS 2002: IV-9). Sister Mary had tended the house while the other sisters supervised the children and slaves (HBA/HS 2002: IV-9).

But it became increasingly harder to make a living on this old, crowded farm. There were 19 people living in the two households, with little room to spare. The back farm Isaac bought in the 1820s would eventually be given to his daughter Margaret and her conniving husband Reuben in 1838 (NJCEA 1851: 496). Isaac hoped Reuben could provide labor on his farm and Margaret could aid him with household chores. After all, he desperately needed the help. The old slaves who had served his parents with such loyalty, Jack and Deyon, were dead and buried. Near the turn of the century, the state had passed a gradual emancipation act in 1804 and soon most of the remaining slaves would be free. Indeed, Caesar and Simon had both been freed, and fewer slaves were left to toil and labor in the fields and perform chores around the house

² This would be roughly \$30,000 in 2009 United States currency (<http://www.measuringworth.com/ppowerus/?redirurl=calculators/ppowerus/>, retrieved April 23, 2003).

(SCHQ 1913: 46-51). With no sons to work the farm, he had to find other ways to sow the fields, tend the crops, and make money.

There were some good times. The construction of the Easton Turnpike and the canal, the famous Delaware and Raritan Canal across the property, had put some money in Isaac's pocket, allowing him to build a large wing on the house where he could live with his wife and daughter separate from his sisters. The money went so quickly. Perhaps the answer was to sell more land. After all, the farm was old and the land worn out. Villages were springing up all along the canal; why not here in South Bound Brook? His son-in-law Reuben and other investors took advantage of this opportunity and in 1836 convinced him to sell a portion of his farm, eventually subdividing it with other investors and creating the village of South Bound Brook (Gall and Veit 2009). But what was a farmer to do when he had no more land to sell?

Perhaps he should have headed west to California like his niece Margaret's second husband Cornelius La Tourette (Cook 1965). Many New Jersey farmers with worn out land had gone west where with luck and hard work they might begin a new life (Atack and Bateman 1987: 56). Of course, Cornelius' trip had proved ill fated. While he was away panning for gold in California, his three young children had died. Isaac had buried them in view of the kitchen so their mother could look over them as she once watched them play (Cook 1965).

Isaac's other get-rich-quick schemes were similarly ill fated. Like so many of his neighbors, he had hoped silk would bring him wealth, and, with other family members who were equally financially strained, he had joined the craze and purchased 2,000 silk worms (Cook 1965; Schmidt 1977). The worms soon died. To add insult to injury, his own daughter turned against him after her mother, his first wife, Martha Ross, died.

It happened like this. After his first wife died in 1838, Isaac married Maria Matthews in 1840. He had waited the appropriate amount of time, but it had been a tough decision. His sisters did not want him to remarry. Unsure of where to turn, he had asked his former mother-in-law for advice. When she asked who the girl's parents were, he told her his

proposed bride was "of a low stamp" (NJCEA 1854: 26). But what was a man to do? He was not young anymore and his bouts with the bottle made him look older than his years. He desperately needed a wife to help run the farm.

His sisters and daughter were very unhappy. Isaac was 49 and his new wife was 22, younger than his own daughter. Four months later they had a son whom Isaac named Abraham after his father. The birth of a son, who could help with farm chores and inherit the land, should have been a joyous occasion. But all was not well.

The daughter of his first marriage, Margaret, and his son-in-law Reuben, told him in no uncertain terms that his new wife Maria was a "bad woman" who would ruin him and "strip him of all his property" (NJCC 1846). Reuben and Margaret persisted in their accusations, claiming that his young wife Maria was guilty of "loose and unfaithful conduct" and was "the lowest of the low" (NJCC 1846). His sisters were even worse, calling Maria a "Dirty hussy and a dirty slut" and even a "moge" or a cat in heat (NJCC 1846; NJCEA 1854: 8). They said the baby Abraham was not his, it was John Tai's or Isaac Fisher's bastard (NJCEA 1854: 823). What should he do? It was so hard to tell, as he was in the "habit of drinking ardent spirits to the point of intoxication" (NJCEA 1854: 1).

Irate, he ordered Maria to stay in the kitchen with the servants. The gossip continued, and, at Reuben's insistence, he sent his wife and infant son away from the house (NJCEA 1854: 816). Fearing that he might lose the farm to debts incurred by Maria, he signed over all his property to Reuben and Margaret hoping to provide himself with a measure of protection from his errant wife (NJCEA 1849: 501). In return he was promised "a full, ample, and comfortable, support, living, and maintenance" (Somerset County Clerk's Office 1842). Deeply depressed, he drank himself to sleep. Indeed, he was "at that time and long after in a constant state of intoxication" (NJCEA 1849: 513-519; NJCEA 1854: 2).

Reuben pressured Isaac to draw up divorce papers, but the scrivener, an unassuming little man, said don't sign these, not yet, go home, you aren't well, sleep on this. Instead, he decided to see his wife Maria

and his son. They were in desperate straits, without food or sufficient clothing, dependent on the charity of neighbors (NJCEA 1854: 875).

Isaac soon began to wonder about Reuben's intentions. He had already subdivided the land he purchased years back from Isaac to form the new village of South Bound Brook almost at the farmhouse's backdoor. What was he doing now? Was he jealous of Isaac and his young wife? Did he covet Isaac's land? Was he afraid that he and his wife's meager inheritance would be eaten up by Isaac's new family, or was he concerned about the welfare of Isaac's sisters, who depended on the family farm and home for their financial stability? Isaac decided to stay with Maria. Appalled, Reuben came to fetch him home. When Isaac resisted, they scuffled and Reuben stabbed him (NJCEA 1854: 22)!

Incredulous at what had befallen him, Isaac sought legal counsel and sued Reuben for defrauding him of his property and ejecting him from the family farm (NJCC1846, 1848; NJCEA 1854). After seven years in court, Isaac lost the lawsuit (NJCEA 1856). In this case and others, some of the African American servants and former slaves who lived with Isaac strongly supported his position. Indeed, Lewis Smock, a free African American man who acted as farm manager was one of several witnesses who testified to Maria's good character. In his words:

I lived with Isaac Staats at the time he married his present wife. I was there when he brought her home. He had two black boys and they were not in good condition for clothing when Mrs. Staats came. They were named Jack and Dick. Jack was in a very bad condition when I was there—his clothes were ragged and he was filthy lousy—he had body lice on him. Dick's clothing was very poor. He had no stockings, only stocking legs, it was in the winter. The swill barrel stood in the corner of the kitchen. It was very nasty about it. After Mrs. Staats came there she went to work & fixed their clothes and bedding. She had Jack cleaned and gave him a clean shirt & jacket. She had the swill barrel moved. There was maggots under it. She cleaned up pretty much everything about the kitchen. It made things more comfortable. I lived there with Mr. Staats until the next spring (NJCC 1846).

Not surprisingly, Isaac's sisters provided direct contradictory testimony (NJCEA 1854: 867).

Reuben had damaged his own case by locking Isaac out of his home, hastily selling his personal belongings at auction, hauling away carloads of soil and manure from the Staats farm to his own, and cutting down the family's precious woodlot. After years of contention, the courts finally ruled in Reuben and Margaret's favor (NJCEA 1856). Isaac was fortunate to engage in an agreement allowing him to lease the old farmstead for perpetuity, with the understanding that he maintain the property (SCCO 1855). In 1867, he and Maria released their claim to the property, and Reuben, who had removed to Independence, Iowa with his family by this time, agreed to erect a small home on a one-half acre parcel set off from the farmstead for Isaac's house (SCCO 1867a, 1867b, 1867c). The house still stands. Two years later, after Isaac's death, Maria released her claim to the lease and moved (SCCO 1869).

After the lawsuits ended in 1854 and the elderly Staats sisters died, the property came into the hands of Isaac's niece Margaret LaTourette and her son Cornelius, the first mayor of South Bound Brook. Cornelius' wife maintained the home as a sort of private museum to her famous, or perhaps infamous, kinfolk (Schleicher and Winter 1999: 90-91). Later, in the 1930s, the family's financial situation again declined and after nearly two centuries of ownership, the property passed out of their hands.

Today, the Abraham Staats House is one of the finest surviving 18th-century structures in the Raritan Valley (Historic Building Architects, LLC and Heritage Studies 2002). Visited by noted historian of the Revolution, Benson Lossing (1850-1852: 333) in 1848, it graces the cover of the Somerset County Historic Sites Survey (Research and Archaeological Management 1989) and was illustrated in numerous regional histories published during the early 20th century (Van Sickle 1936: 93; Cawley 1965; Van Horn 1965: 202-203; Vail and Vail 1972). The building was recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1936 and was listed on the State and National Registers in 2002. Acquired by the Borough of South Bound Brook from its last owner, Walter Bielecky in 2002, it is undergoing major renovations to transform it into a local history museum.



Figure 5. Artifacts associated with the occupation of Peter and/or Hendrik Staats. From top to bottom, left to right, they are a trade form tobacco pipe, fragment of buff-bodied earthenware (a.k.a. Staffordshire Slipware) c. 1670-1790, and three fragments of gray salt glazed stoneware made in the Rhenish style. These may be imported or may have been locally produced. (Photo by Richard Veit.)

Archaeology

The archaeological investigation of the property has directly affected our understanding of the lives of the individuals who once called the farmstead home. A total of 99 shovel tests and 16 3' X 3' excavation units were excavated on the property. They revealed 18th- and 19th-century midden deposits in front of, beside, and behind the house. Also identified were an early-18th-century builder's trench, a barn or other outbuilding, and an artifact-rich late-19th-century subfloor deposit.

Abraham may have expanded what during the late 18th century was probably a two-room Dutch cottage to meet the needs of his young family. Archaeological fieldwork revealed a builder's trench behind the section of the house Abraham erected. It contained tobacco pipe stems, buff-bodied English earthenware, and gray salt glazed stoneware, either German or locally produced in the Rhenish style, indicating the structure was built before the 1760s (FIG. 5). In fact, tree-ring dating provided a date of 1722 for the earliest section of the house, which corresponds with Cornelia Beekman's acquisition of the property. Interestingly, there is nothing among the artifacts that would

hint at the site inhabitants' ethnicity. This is curious given that archaeologists working with slightly earlier material from nearby New York have found that traditional Dutch ceramic vessels continued to be used into the 18th century (Janowitz 1993: 21; Wilcoxon 1987).

Abraham's occupation is represented by a sheet midden deposit in front of the farmstead's Federal wing, likely associated with an outkitchen that the wing replaced. Such structures were ubiquitous components of 18th and early-19th-century rural farmsteads (Gall et al. 2007, 2008, 2009; Veit 2009). Antiquated by the mid-19th century, very few survive today. The foundation of an earlier structure, drawn by Historic American Buildings Survey delineators in 1936, was not visible in the recent excavations. Two excavation units dug to explore the 18th-century sheet midden revealed an artifact-rich deposit, presumably a buried occupation surface, sealed by soil upcast when the Federal wing was constructed around 1825. Together with other finds, artifacts associated with Abraham's occupation point to a growing degree of refinement in the household during the 18th century. This was a time when wealthier families began to increasingly invest in finer ceramics, glasswares, and other consumer goods that reflected their social status (Bushman 1993).

The occupation by Isaac and his sisters is also well represented archaeologically. Just east of the house a second sheet midden was



Figure 6. Two hard rubber combs recovered from a mid-19th century kitchen midden at the Staats house. The fine-toothed comb on right is the type of comb referred to as a lice comb. (Photo by Richard Veit.)

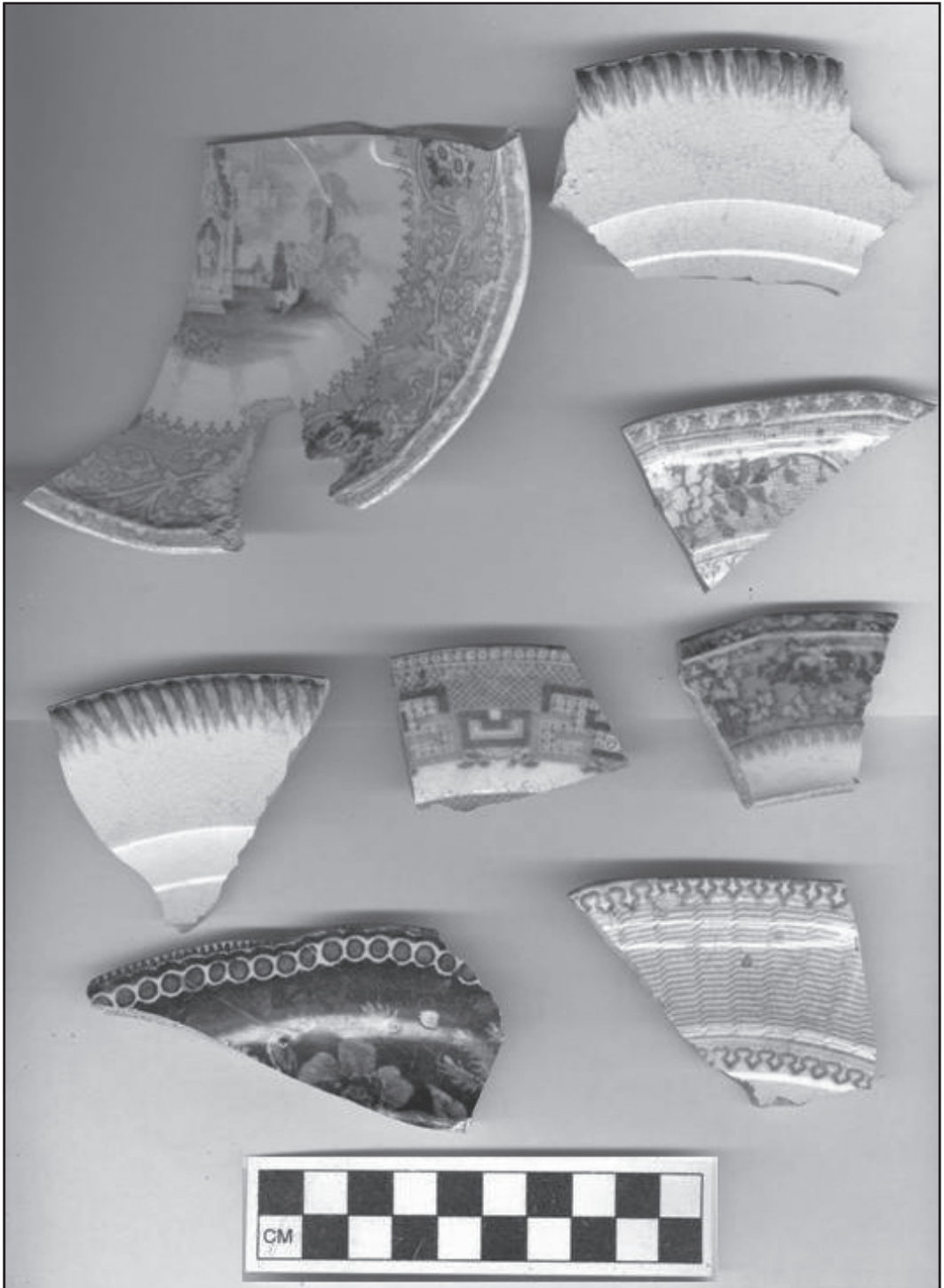


Figure 7. Mid-19th century transfer-printed white earthenware ceramics discarded in a kitchen midden adjacent to the Staats house during the period when ownership of the property was contested. (Photo by Richard Veit.)



Figure 8. A fragmentary Montelupo charger found in a mid-19th century context at the Staats house. Dating from the 17th century or before, it was likely a family heirloom. (Photo by Richard Veit.)

encountered. Ceramics and food remains were quite abundant in this deposit, as were personal artifacts. Interestingly, items similar to those mentioned in the court transcripts were present, including a pair of lice combs and several buttons (FIG. 6). It was obvious, even for this landed family, hygiene was an issue. Considerable attention in the court transcripts

focused on the condition of Isaac's portion of the house. The midden so close to the kitchen door could be interpreted either as reflecting slovenly housekeeping or, more likely, as a series of housecleaning episodes during the period when the ownership of the farmstead was contested (FIG. 7). Indeed, these items may have been discarded during the period when the house was occupied by Reuben Freeman, as Reuben is known to have auctioned off some of Isaac's possessions.

Excavation units placed to document the presence of a former shed addition on the western end of the house revealed mixed 18th-, 19th-, and 20th-century deposits. Interestingly, a single fragment of a polychrome tin-glazed Montelupo charger, made in Italy during the 16th or 17th centuries, was found with other artifacts dating primarily from the early 19th century. Presumably, this sherd represents part of a family heirloom lost or broken during the 19th century. The broken artifact, treasured for so long by the Staats family as a sentimental piece, mimicked the state of the family by the mid-19th century, once proud but now broken (FIG. 8).

Isaac's sister Sarah kept a diary for a short while during the 1840s (Cook 1965). Her diary makes only passing note of the lawsuit described above. But she does note that the family's barn burned down in 1844. Evidence of that destructive event was found in the remains of a barn foundation found to the northeast of the house, in the side yard. Charcoal was present in the deposits associated with the structure and the artifacts are consistent with a mid-19th-century date of occupation.

Other rich archaeological deposits were located within the footprint of the house. A pair of excavation units was dug within the crawl space of the



Figure 9. An assemblage of late 19th century glassware found beneath the floor of the kitchen wing of the Staats house. The collection includes two tumblers, a bottle of "Healey and Bigelow's Kickapoo Indian Oil," Florida Water, wine, medicine, and whisky bottles. A small inkwell and a "frozen Charlotte" style doll are in the center foreground of the photograph. (Photo by Richard Veit.)

Federal wing's kitchen. Together they measured just over five-feet square. On the ground surface and in the first soil layer, a noteworthy collection of late-19th-century bottles was present. The deposit dates from the occupation of Margaret LaTourette (1871-1906), Isaac's niece, and could represent a cleaning episode when her son Eugene LaTourette inherited the property from his mother in 1906 (FIG. 9). It includes 13 marked bottles ranging from popular cure-alls, such as Healey and Bigelow's Kickapoo Indian Oil and Saxlehner's Bitterquelle, to St. Jacob's Oil, and several bottles of Ponds Extract, including an intact and still stoppered bottle. Bottles from local physicians and pharmacists in New Brunswick and Bound Brook were also present, as were three inkwells, highlighting the literacy of family members. If these represent the stock of Mrs. Margaret LaTourette's medicine cabinet, she was treating a variety of aches and pains with alcohol-laced patent medicines, was concerned about her skin like so many women of the late 19th century after the creation of the cosmetic industry, and made sure to smell nice with Florida Water.

Interpretations

In its nearly three century history, the Staats house was home to Tories, at least in the name of Tory Jack, the African-American spy; Patriots, Abraham and his guest the Baron von Steuben and, of course, George and Martha Washington; inebriates in the form of Isaac, and perhaps even a hussy—Maria, Isaac's wife, was called this and much worse. Although this paper is only a first step in understanding the site, it can also serve as a case study in archaeology and microhistory. In this case, archaeology proved a catalyst for extensive historical research that revealed a much different and richer history for the house and the people who lived there than we had expected. Rather than clarify, it served to considerably complicate the history of the house and spoke to the complexities of rural life in the Raritan Valley and the people who inhabited the farmstead.

The Staats House is not simply important as another surviving colonial house, though it is an excellent example of Anglo-Dutch architecture; it is important because of how the lives of the

individuals who lived there tie into larger themes and trends in American history. To point to a few, the archaeological investigations highlight the early colonial settlement of the property as western European immigrants ventured to the New World and called the Raritan Valley home. Abraham and his wife Margaret Staats strongly supported the Revolution and experienced the vicissitudes of war, entertaining famous generals and suffering from British raids. Evidence for an extensive fire in the earliest section of the house may well relate to the work of British troops, who set numerous houses in the Raritan Valley ablaze in 1776-1777 (Veit and Wiencek 2008: 60). Indeed, the Garret Voorhees house, just 3.75 miles away, was burned to the ground by British raiders in 1777 (Gall, Hayden, and Lore 2009). Kitchen midden deposits in front of the house also may relate to the period when the Staats family was at its height in the community, hosting large numbers of American troops and dignitaries.

During the early 19th century, most New Jersey farms underwent a significant decline, as soil was depleted by decades of agriculture, land was subdivided over generations to the point of being agriculturally unprofitable, and populations grew (Schmidt 1977). Much of the conflict we see at the Staats house may relate to these issues. Abraham and Margaret Staats had several daughters before their son was born. Fairly well-to-do, they encouraged their daughters' educations, but they seem to have been somewhat less successful in finding appropriate suitors for them. Unmarried or following failed marriages, the daughters returned to the family home, and like so many young women, who out of economic need and a desire for independence took to factory work, the sisters were forced to take charge of and manage their half of the farm and even venture into local political life. Independent and educated, they exemplified and foreshadowed the changing social and political role women began to achieve later in the 19th century.

Isaac, Abraham and Margaret's only son, was the youngest family member. Unlike his elder sisters, no evidence survives that speaks to his educational accomplishments. His first marriage resulted in a daughter. Given the

sexual division of labor generally seen in 19th-century agrarian households, the Staats family was disadvantaged by the relative lack of men and was forced to rely upon slave and tenant labor, and their son. This may have been one of the reasons that Isaac resented his college-educated son-in-law's lack of agricultural knowledge.

Isaac's second marriage created enormous stresses in the family. Marrying Maria Mathews, a much younger woman who had previously worked as a servant for wealthier families, was a taboo union that would have been viewed as transgressing many social boundaries. Marriages were seen as "economic, social, and cultural alliances" (Fabend 1991: 35). Isaac gained no clear economic advantage from this marriage except, perhaps, in the ability of his young wife to bear children and perform housework. His social status was reduced by the union and Maria was anything but a member of the circle of families with whom the Staats' had traditionally intermarried, such as the Wykoffs, DuBois, and Bayles. In fact, it was common during this period and earlier for Dutch families to marry within a rather limited range of neighbors and peers (Fabend 1991: 37). Isaac clearly broke from this social and cultural norm in an unacceptable fashion. Further complicating matters were the rumors that Isaac and Maria's young son, born shortly after their marriage, had been fathered by someone else. Isaac's social standing was further reduced by his impropriety, incompetence, and intemperance, which by 1847 escalated to the point that family members no longer found him fit to manage his sister Sarah Bayles' trust fund (NJCEA 1849: 513-516).

Isaac's sisters, daughter, son-in-law, some of his servants, family physician, and some neighbors saw this marriage as disastrous. They accused Maria of unfaithfulness, drunkenness, slovenliness, theft, and inappropriate behavior, such as sleeping in the kitchen with the servants, sleeping late, and using a chamber pot in front of the male African American servants (NJCEA 1854: 856). Others present her in a very different light. Catherine Martin, another witness for Isaac, testified that the house was neatly kept when Isaac and Maria—his second wife—lived there. Sarah Higgins, Maria Staats' former employer, testified to her being a hard worker, sober, and a good

housekeeper. In one of our few sympathetic glimpses of Maria, Higgins recounts that when Maria went away to marry Isaac, "she [Maria] said I would miss her, and I did miss her" (NJCEA 1854: 15). One witness even testified that Reuben Freeman had often complimented Maria Staats on her cooking (NJCEA 1854: 839)!

Although neither the historical nor the archaeological record allows us to do more than speculate as to whether Maria was a good cook, faithful wife, or even tempered, the presence of this poor, less-educated woman of childbearing age seems to have enraged the Staats sisters. While all or some of their accusations may have been correct, it is also possible that they feared her influence over their younger brother, that they distrusted someone so much younger than themselves, and were afraid of the implications for their lives and the farm if Isaac and his new wife were to have a family.

Given their brother's self-proclaimed weakness for drink and the contemporaneous rise of the temperance movement, the concern about Isaac's ability to make rational decisions seems justified. The court transcripts repeatedly highlight Isaac's inability to function when drunk (NJCEA 1849: 513-516). Indeed, the sisters may have seen themselves as living proof of Timothy Arthur Shay's moralizing parable, "Ten Nights in a Barroom," the great temperance novel published in 1854, which portrays a hardworking miller reduced to ruin through drink. Shay's powerful novel helped shape antebellum middle-class behavior.

Moreover, the family, which like many Dutch families was dependent upon slave labor to work a fairly large parcel of land, freed its slaves in the early 19th century creating further economic stresses. The emancipation of their slaves should not be seen as a product of enlightened self-interest. Rather it may have been done under duress as New Jersey began a gradual emancipation process in 1804 by which enslaved women born after July 4th of that year became free at their 21st birthday and enslaved men were freed at age 25 (Green 1995). Based on the court transcripts, it appears that many of the African American members of the Staats household experienced very poor treatment, even after emancipation, being provided with minimal clothes, food, and few provisions to maintain adequate

hygiene (NJCEA 1854: 870). A handful of African Americans, however, such as Lewis Smock, seem to have acted in more managerial roles and apparently had commensurately better living conditions. Later, in the 19th century, hired servants and tenants, primarily Irish immigrants, filled some of the same roles on the farm. Archaeological deposits adjacent to the 1820s wing of the house seem to reflect repeated episodes of household clearance in the mid-19th century. Indeed, artifacts such as lice combs and buttons referenced in the court documents were found in these deposits, which highlight the “revolving door” nature of the house’s occupation during the lawsuits.

The house itself, the most significant artifact associated with the family, speaks to both its Dutch origin and the family’s early-19th-century aspirations and needs. The growth of the family required additional living space, a necessity further compounded by the need to modernize the home as evidence of the family’s social status and to provide space for more purchased goods as the consumer revolution increasingly gained ground in the new nation. Funds to expand the old farmstead, presumably secured from the sale of land for the Turnpike Road and the Delaware and Raritan Canal, enabled the construction of a fashionable Federal style wing. Isaac soon realized that quick cash came not from the products of his small farm, but from the sale of the farmland itself. The mid-1830s to early 1840s marked a period of frequent land sales. Perhaps Isaac hoped to get rich; alternatively, he may have been forced to sell land simply to maintain appearances and generate a sufficient income to support his growing household. Often drunk, Isaac was unable to manage his affairs. He also may have sought a role in the creation and development of the Village of South Bound Brook, but this is unlikely given his documented incompetence and shortsightedness. Instead, his role included the sale and eventual forfeiture of his land thereby reducing the family’s ability to support itself. High hopes and last ditch agricultural schemes such as growing mulberry trees and raising silkworms also proved unsuccessful as did Cornelius LaTourette’s attempt at gold mining during the Gold Rush. At almost every turn, the family fell short of renewing its former prominence in

the community. Rather than squander away land held for generations by the family, Isaac’s sisters realized the value in improved and well-maintained land and retained ownership of the parcels they received from their father Abraham. With a drunkard brother like Isaac, their education and land proved two of the greatest assets upon which the Staats sisters could continuously rely.

Later still, Cornelius’ son Eugene Dubois LaTourette, the first mayor of South Bound Brook, and his wife Florence participated in the colonial revival movement, decorating their house with family heirlooms celebrating their Revolutionary heritage, while forgetting more recent family battles. Today, the house and its associated archaeological deposits reflect new trends in American history, the continuing interest in honoring America’s past through the historic house museum and even archaeology.

Historical archaeology has much to contribute to our understanding of the modern world. It can reveal the pervasive nature of capitalism, highlight class conflict, expand our knowledge of gender roles, reflect and refine our understanding of the historical and continuing role of race in shaping American culture. As the archaeology of the Staats house highlights, it can also be a catalyst for a deeper understanding of individual sites and how they can inform and refine our knowledge of our shared past and the broader trends that shaped it.

Phebe Staats’ Rejoinder

Dear Reader,

That scholars would find the sad tale of my younger brother and his mismanagement of our family farm of interest certainly reflects the depravity of man. Let me briefly try to correct these errors put down here by these men of pretended learning as fact.

It is true that my parents had long wanted a son. I was sixteen when he was born. Father and mother were so happy, but Isaac was troubled. My father had gone to great pains and considerable expense to educate my sisters and me. We were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, bookkeeping, as well as music, sewing, and cooking. Mother was old when Isaac was born. Although father had once been

a wealthy man, times had changed. When I returned from school in Philadelphia, father could hardly manage the farm. Isaac was still a boy. I could oversee the account books and the servants. I did what I could. I was a woman but I was respected. When thieves plagued the neighborhood, the men asked me to serve on the Vigilance Committee. They didn't ask Isaac. He was too young and had no sense of responsibility. I had hoped to support my parents until Isaac was old enough to assume successful management of the farm. That day never came.

Unlike my sisters, I never married. I was too busy, and before I knew it suitors stopped calling. With my father's help, my brother was able to marry. Isaac and Martha had but one child, Margaret. When father and mother passed, my sisters and I inherited half the farm and half the house. Isaac inherited the rest. Isaac wanted to be a great man like our father, but he lacked self-control. In melancholy despair over the death of our beloved parents and our sister Margaret's untimely passing, he became a drunkard, an intoxicated fool who squandered away his money and our family farm. For a time, we made the best of it. Even my niece Margaret and her husband Reuben helped where they could, though they soon grew tired of my brother's vices, particularly Reuben who bore the brunt of Isaac's false promises. Reuben and Isaac ardently disdained one another. Out of respect and affection for her father, Margaret did not utter a word against him.

Circumstances were bad but we tried to make the best of it. He was our brother after all and could be forgiven for his vices. That is, until he did the unthinkable. Constantly drunk, he slept with Maria Mathews, a no-account servant girl. When she found herself distressed, the drunken, undignified fool offered to marry her. Isaac told my sister Mary that he married Maria to spite Reuben even though she was the lowest of the low. Mary said she told him that his spite would fall on his own head. It did! His impropriety disgraced the family's good name too. And who could be sure Maria's child was Isaac's? Her awful language and slovenly appearance were enough to make any respectable creature cringe! My sisters disliked Maria immeasurably, and Sarah refused to speak to her. Though our

homes adjoined, we rarely set foot in Isaac's portion. We knew that girl would ruin him, though it was his own fault. Isaac too worried that she would put him deeper in debt. After he removed her from the homestead, he publicly advertised he would not be responsible for repaying any of her debts, though both he and we knew the law would rule in her favor until there was a divorce.

Isaac finally came to his senses. We all looked over his shoulder as he signed over the title to his portion of the farmstead to our niece Margaret in his living room. Maria and Isaac could no longer jeopardize the family's landholding. It was such a relief. Aware of his weakness, our brother even had the foresight to require Margaret and Reuben to ensure his well being. It was written into their mortgage. Our hopes were dashed when Reuben began to exact his revenge. He pillaged the farm and drew plans to turn the property into a new village. How was our brother to support himself, and what was to become of our beloved home?

Soon Isaac accepted Maria back into his home and the real problems began. He dragged the family's name deeper through the mud, taking his daughter and her husband to court claiming that Reuben had preyed on his weaknesses and beguiled him into relinquishing his farm to Margaret. It was such a disgrace. He was constantly intoxicated and tried everything to satisfy his thirst for that evil poison that has ruined so many. For years, the battle between Isaac and Reuben continued. I had little to say when forced to testify. Certainly I would take no part in humiliating my beloved brother. Mary, Sarah, and Jane felt differently of course. They were aghast at his behavior. It was such a sorrowful day when my sisters Sarah, Jane, and Mary could bear his foolish behavior no longer and testified to his incompetence. The event was embarrassing for the whole family.

The court cases dragged on for years. Reuben and Margaret finally won and soon afterward removed to Independence, Iowa, where my darling Margaret died. Reuben's conscience must have weighed on him heavily, as he gave the old house and garden to my sister Sarah. Isaac remained married to Maria and had three more sons and a daughter. My brother Isaac was the apple of our parent's eye, but his folly and desire for that deadly

poison drink were the worms that consumed a once sweet and innocent fruit. Isaac, spoiled and soured from a lifetime of intemperance and sorrow, and Reuben, whose motives were less than sincere, laid our family low. Their actions shamed and injured our once dignified family name, a burden and suffering my sisters and I were left to endure for the remainder of our lives. Yet, my beloved sisters and I remained dignified in our ability to persevere through the family's misfortunes. That is the real story of our family and its tribulations.

Respectfully,
Phebe Staats

Acknowledgements

This paper was improved by the comments of two anonymous reviewers. We appreciate the help shown by Sue Maguire as she shepherded it through the editorial process. This project was made possible by generous grants from the New Jersey Historic Trust, Somerset County Historic Trust, and the unflagging support of the Friends of the Abraham Staats House. A special thanks to Kathy and Tom Ormosi, Kathy and Brian Faulks, Bob Gaudio, Kells Swan, and Tom D'Amico for their assistance. Our colleagues and former colleagues at Monmouth University, particularly Gerard P. Scharfenberger and Bill Schindler, who co-directed field-schools at the site are also thanked as are Allison Gall, Adam Heinrich, and our students and volunteers who assisted with the fieldwork.

References

- Atack, Jeremy and Fred Bateman
1987 *To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North*. Iowa State University Press, Ames.
- Bailey, Rosalee Fellows
1968 *Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses and Families in Northern New Jersey and Southern New York*. Dover, NY.
- Barth, Linda J.
2002 *The Delaware and Raritan Canal*. Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, SC.
- Beaudry, Mary C.
1996 Reinventing Historical Archaeology. In *Historical Archaeology and the Study of American Culture*, ed. by Lu Ann De Cunzo and Bernard L. Herman, 473-497. Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.
- Bushman, Richard
1993 *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*. Vintage, New York.
- Cater, Mary Hartwell
1913 The Staats' House and Baron Steuben. *Somerset County Historical Quarterly* 2(2): 81-87.
- Cook, Lewis D.
1958 The Family of John Staats of Hillsborough Township. *Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey* 33: 25-32, 96.
- Cook, Lewdis D., transcriber
1965 The Journal of Sarah (Staats) Bayles, 1839-1850, Mistress of the Ancestral Abraham Staats Homestead, South Bound Brook, Somerset County, New Jersey. Privately printed, Philadelphia.
- Darnton, Robert
1985 *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*. Vintage, New York.
- Davis, T. E.
1895 The Battle of Bound Brook, An Address Delivered Before the Washington Camp Ground Association, February 22, 1894. The Chronicle Steam Printery, Bound Brook, NJ.
- Deagan, Kathleen
1991 Historical Archaeology's Contributions to Our Understanding of Early America. In *Historical Archaeology in Global Perspective*, ed. by Lisa Falk, 97-112. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

- Deetz, James
 1977 *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life*. Anchor Books, New York.
 1993 *Flowerdew Hundred: The Archaeology of a Virginia Plantation 1619-1864*. University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville.
- De Cunzo, Lu Ann
 2004 *A Historical Archaeology of Delaware: People, Contexts, and Cultures of Agriculture*. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.
- Fabend, Firth Haring
 1991 *A Dutch Family in the Middle Colonies, 1660-1800*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.
- Fagan, Brian
 2006 *Writing Archaeology: Telling Stories About the Past*. Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, California.
- Ferguson, Leland
 1992 *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.
- Gall, Michael J., Robert J. Lore, and Philip A. Hayden
 2007 Life on the Van Kirk/Walton/Forman Farmstead, circa 1742-1800, Archaeological Data Recovery at the Manalapan Village House Site (28-Mo-349), Manalapan Township, Monmouth County, New Jersey. Report for Kenderian Zilinski Associates, Inc., Wall Township, from Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc., Cranbury, NJ. Report on file at the Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, NJ.
- Gall, Michael J., Robert J. Lore, and Philip A. Hayden
 2008 Earthfast in Eighteenth-Century New Jersey: Archaeological Data Recovery at the Foundation Site (28-Mo-352), Manalapan Township, Monmouth County, New Jersey. Administrative Consent Order, Four Seasons at Manalapan, EA ID # A060001-1326-02-0003.1. Report for K. Hovnanian at Manalapan II, LLC, Hamilton Township from Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc., Cranbury, NJ. Report on file at the Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, NJ.
- Gall, Michael J., Robert J. Lore, and Philip A. Hayden
 2009 Farm Life in Nineteenth-Century Monmouth County: Archaeological Data Recovery at the Garret Forman Site (28-Mo-354), Manalapan Township, Monmouth County, New Jersey. Administrative Consent Order, Four Seasons at Manalapan, EA ID # A060001-1326-02-0003.1. Report for K. Hovnanian at Manalapan II, LLC, Hamilton Township from Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc., Cranbury, NJ. Report on file at the Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, NJ.
- Gall, Michael J., Philip Hayden, and Robert Lore
 2009 Blacksmithing and Farriering in Eighteenth-Century Somerset County: Archaeological Excavations at the Voorhees Site (28-So-153), Franklin Township, Somerset County, New Jersey. Report for Somerset County Engineering, Somerville Borough from Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc., Cranbury, NJ. Report on file at the Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, NJ.
- Gall, Michael J. and Richard F. Veit
 2009 The Abraham Staats Family: A Reflection on the Trials and Tribulations of a Dutch-American Family in South Bound Brook, New Jersey. Unpublished manuscript on file with the Friends of the Abraham Staats House, South Bound Brook, New Jersey.
- Gibb, James G.
 2000 Imaginary, but no means unimaginable: storytelling, science, historical archaeology. *Historical Archaeology* 34(2): 1-6.
- Green, Howard, ed.
 1995 Every Child Shall Be Free, But...The Gradual Abolition of Slavery (1804). *Words that Make New Jersey History*. 84-87. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.
- HABS-Historic American Buildings Survey
 1936 The Abraham Staats House, General Baron Von Steuben Headquarters, South Bound Brook, Somerset County, New Jersey. Project No. 65-1715.
- Hall, Martin and Stephen W. Silliman
 2006 Introduction: Archaeology of the Modern World In *Historical Archaeology*, ed. by Martin Hall and Stephen W. Silliman, 1-19. Blackwell, Malden, MA.
- Hicks, Dan and Mary C. Beaudry, eds.
 2006 *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Historic Building Architects, LLC with Heritage Studies (HBA/HS)
 2002 Historic Structure Report for the Abraham Staats House, South Bound Brook, Somerset County, New Jersey. Report for the Borough of South Bound Brook from Historic Building Architects, Trenton. Report on file with the Friends of the Abraham Staats House, South Bound Brook, New Jersey.

- Janowitz, Meta
1993 Indian Corn and Dutch Pots: Seventeenth-Century Foodways in New Amsterdam, New York. *Historical Archaeology* 27(2): 6-24.
- King, Julia A.
2006 Household archaeology, identities and biographies. In *The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology*, ed. by Dan Hicks and Mary Beaudry, 293-313. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Leone Mark P. and Parker B. Potter, eds.
1999 *Historical Archaeologies of Capitalism*. Kluwer/Plenum, New York.
- Lossing, Benson
1850-1852 *Pictorial Field Book of the American Revolution*. Harper Brothers, New York.
- McGuire, Randall H., Dean Saitta, and Phil Duke
1998 Archaeology of the Colorado Coal Field War 1913-1914. *Radical History Review* 72:79-80.
- McMahon, Lucia and Deborah Schriver
2000 *To Read My Heart: The Diary of Rachel Van Dyke, 1810-1811*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.
- New Jersey Chancery Court (NJCC)
1846 In the Chancery of New Jersey Between Isaac Staats, Complainant and Reuben H. Freeman and Margaret his wife, Defendants. Bill for Relief & C.W. Thompson, Filed February 11, 1846. Peter Vroom Papers, MG 20, Box 14, Folder 1, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
1848a Isaac Staats, Complainant, and Reuben H. Freeman and Margaret His Wife, Defendants. In Chancery of New Jersey on Bill and Answer, April 17th, 1848 at Somerville. On file at the New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
1848b Isaac Staats, Complainant, and Reuben H. Freeman and Margaret His Wife, Defendants. In Chancery of New Jersey on Bill and Answer, May 11th, 1848 at Middlebrook. On file at the New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
- New Jersey Court of Errors and Appeals (NJCEA)
1846 Reuben H. Freeman and Margaret his wife, Appellants, and Isaac Staats, Respondent. An Appeal from Degree in Chancery, Filed February 10, 1846. On file at the New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
- 1849 Sarah Bayles, Wife of William Bayles, By Her Friend, V. Isaac Staats, Respondent, September Term, 1846. In George Halstead, Reports of Cases Determined in the Court of Chancery and the Prerogative Court and, On Appeal, in the Court of Errors and Appeals, of the State of New Jersey, Volume I, E. Sanderson, Elizabethtown, New Jersey, 513-516.
- 1851 Isaac Staats V. Reuben H. Freeman and His Wife, December Term, 1847. In George Halstead, Reports of Cases Determined in the Court of Chancery and the Prerogative Court and, On Appeal, in the Court of Errors and Appeals, of the State of New Jersey, Volume II, Daily Advertiser Office, Newark, New Jersey, 490-506.
- 1854 Reuben H. Freeman and Margaret His Wife, Appellants, and Isaac Staats, Respondent, June Term, 1853. In George Halstead, Reports of Cases Determined in the Court of Chancery and the Prerogative Court and, On Appeal, in the Court of Errors and Appeals, of the State of New Jersey, Volume IV, Daily Advertiser Office, Newark, New Jersey, 814-885.
- 1856 Reuben H. Freeman and Margaret His Wife, Appellants, and Isaac Staats, Respondent, June Term, 1853. In John P. Stockton, Reports of Cases Determined in the Court of Chancery and the Prerogative Court and, On Appeal, in the Court of Errors and Appeals, of the State of New Jersey, Volume I, True American Office, Trenton, New Jersey, 816-822.
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System (NJDEP GIS)
2008 i-MapNJ. Accessed Online, November 23, 2011, at http://njgin.state.nj.us/dep/DEP_iMapNJDEP/viewer.htm.
- Orser, Charles E.
1995 *Historical Archaeology*. Harper Collins, New York.
- Research and Archaeological Management Inc.
1989 Somerset County Cultural Resource Survey Phase I and Phase II. Prepared by Research and Archaeological Management, Highland Park, New Jersey. Report on file with Rutgers University, Special Collections and Archives.
- Schmidt, Hubert G.
1977 *Agriculture in New Jersey: A Three Hundred Year History*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.

- Schuyler, Robert L., ed.
 1978 *Historical Archaeology: A Guide to Substantive and Theoretical Contributions*. Baywood Publishing Co, Inc., New York.
- Schleicher, William A. and Susan J. Winter
 1999 *Somerset County: Crossroads of the American Revolution*. Arcadia Press, Charleston, SC.
- Somerset County Clerk's Office
 1769 Hendrick and Maghtel Staats to John Staats, April 5, 1769. Deed Book A, Page 51. Somerset County Clerk's Office, Somerville, New Jersey.
 1842 Isaac Staats to Reuben and Margaret Freeman, September 2, 1842. Mortgage Book N, Page 161. Somerset County Clerk's Office, Somerville, New Jersey.
 1855 Reuben H. and Margaret Freeman to Isaac Staats, July 4, 1855. Deed Book V2, Page 348. Somerset County Clerk's Office, Somerville, New Jersey.
 1867a Reuben H. Freeman, Isaac S. Freeman, Mary S. Freeman, Martha A. Freeman, William D. L. Freeman, John R. Freeman, and Eliza H. Freeman to Isaac and Maria Staats, March 10, 1867. Deed Book X3, Page 375. Somerset County Clerk's Office, Somerville, New Jersey.
 1867b Isaac and Maria Staats to Reuben H. Freeman, Isaac S. Freeman, Mary S. Freeman, Martha A. Freeman, William D. L. Freeman, John R. Freeman, and Eliza H. Freeman, March 13, 1867. Deed Book V3, Page 381. Somerset County Clerk's Office, Somerville, New Jersey.
 1867c Isaac and Maria Staats to Isaac S. Freeman, Mary S. Freeman, Martha A. Freeman, William D. L. Freeman, John R. Freeman, and Eliza H. Freeman, March 30, 1867. Deed Book T3, Page 582. Somerset County Clerk's Office, Somerville, New Jersey.
 1869 Maria Staats to Reuben Freeman, May 12, 1869. Deed Book B4, Page 67. Somerset County Clerk's Office, Somerville, New Jersey.
- Somerset County Surrogate's Office
 1821 Last Will and Testament of Abraham Staats, May 10, 1821. Case No. 1882. Somerset County Surrogate's Office, Somerville, New Jersey.
- Somerset County Historical Quarterly
 1913 The Staats House and Von Steuben. *Somerset County Historical Quarterly* 2(2): 80-87.
- Staats, Abraham
 c. 1776 Papers in the Joan Birdsall Collection, Privately held, Copies available at the Abraham Staats House, South Bound Brook, New Jersey.
- Tarlow, Sarah
 1999 Strangely Familiar. In *The Familiar Past? Archaeologies of Later Historical Britain*, ed. by S. Tarlow and Susie West, 263-272. Routledge, London.
- Vail, Betty Bradbury and Edgar Vail
 1972 *The American Revolution in New Jersey*. Neshanic Printing Company, Neshanic, New Jersey.
- Van Horn, J. H.
 1965 *Historic Somerset*. Somerset County Historical Society, Uniman Printers, New Brunswick, NJ.
- Van Sickle, Emogene
 1936 *The Old York Road and Its Stage Coach Days*. D. H. Moreau, Flemington, NJ.
- Veit, Richard F.
 2009 Phase I: Archaeological Survey Van Nest-Hoff-Vannatta Farmstead (28Wa644) Route 519 Harmony Township, Warren County, New Jersey. Report for Harmony Township Historic Commission. Report on file at the Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, NJ.
- Veit, Richard F. and Michael J. Gall
 2005 Phase I and II Archaeological Investigation, the Abraham Staats House (28-So-234), Block 75, Lot 8, 17 Von Steuben Lane, South Bound Brook, Somerset County, New Jersey. Report for South Bound Brook Historic Commission from Monmouth University, West Long Branch. Report on file at the Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, NJ.
 2007 Monmouth University 2006 Archaeological Field School at the Abraham Staats House (28-So-234), Block 75, Lot 8, 17 Von Steuben Lane, South Bound Brook, Somerset County, New Jersey. Report for South Bound Brook Historic Commission from Monmouth University, West Long Branch. Contributions by Gerard Scharfenberger and Bill Schindler. Report on file at the Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, NJ.
- Veit, Richard and Robert Wiencek
 2008 "You Would Not Know the Landing": Archaeological Evidence for the Revolutionary War at Raritan Landing. *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of New Jersey* 64: 56-70.

- Walton, John, James F. Brooks, and Christopher N. DeCorse
 2008 Introduction. In *Small Worlds: Method, Meaning, and Narrative in Microhistory*. ed. by James F. Brooks, Christopher R. N. DeCorse, and John Walton, 1-14. School for American Research Press, Santa Fe.
- West, Susie
 1999 Introduction. In *The Familiar Past?: Archaeologies of Later Historical Britain*. ed. by Sarah Tarlow and Susie West, 1-15. Routledge, London.
- Wilcoxon, Charlotte
 1987 *Dutch Trade and Ceramics in America in the Seventeenth Century*. Albany Institute of Art and History, Albany, New York.
- Wilkie, Laurie A.
 2003 *The Archaeology of Mothering: An African-American Midwife's Tale*. Routledge, London.
- Wilkie, Laurie A. and Kevin M. Bartoy
 2000 A Critical Archaeology Revisited. *Current Anthropology* 41(5): 747-777.
- Yamin, Rebecca
 2008 *Digging in the City of Brotherly Love: Stories from Philadelphia Archaeology*. Yale University Press, New Haven.

Author Information

Richard Veit is an Associate Professor of Anthropology and Anthropology Program Coordinator in the Department of History and Anthropology at Monmouth University. He also directs the university's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Richard Veit
 Monmouth University
 Department of History and Anthropology
 West Long Branch, NJ 07764-1898
 rveit@monmouth.edu

Michael J. Gall is a Senior Archaeologist with Richard Grubb & Associates in Cranbury, New Jersey.

Michael J. Gall
 Richard Grubb and Associates
 Cranbury, NJ 08512
 mgall@richardgrubb.com