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Christopher P. Barton

Francis Marion University, cpbarton16@gmail.com

Kyle Somerville

Powers Archaeology LLC, ksom1016@gmail.com

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Cover Page Footnote

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Sets and Sensibilities: The Excavation of Ideology in Upstate New York

Christopher P. Barton and Kyle Somerville

A growing literature on the archaeology of farmsteads and rural domestic sites has examined commodity consumption as the means by which rural families created and maintained social networks and identities. During the nineteenth century, rural areas were increasingly influenced by the practices and values of the urban middle classes, although not every farmstead would, or could, participate in the same way. This paper examines a matching teacup and saucer recovered from the Spring House, a former commercial farmstead and hotel located in southeastern Monroe County, western New York State. The tea set is decorated with transfer print depictions of Faith, Hope, and Charity, the Three Virtues forming the basis of Christianity, and a motif popular in Victorian America. This paper considers how the tea set, recovered from a rural context, reflects social and genteel identity, and how the occupants of the Spring House used the set to create a sense of respectability through consumption and display.

De plus en plus d'études traitant de l'archéologie des fermes et des sites domestiques ruraux ont examiné la façon dont les familles issues du milieu rural créaient et maintenaient leurs réseaux sociaux et leur identité par le biais de la consommation de produits. Tout au long du 19^e siècle, les régions rurales étaient de plus en plus influencées par les pratiques et les valeurs de la classe moyenne habitant en milieu urbain et ce, malgré le fait que toutes les fermes ne participaient pas de la même façon. Cet article examine une tasse à thé et sa soucoupe, tous deux mis au jour sur le site de la maison Spring House dans le sud-est du comté de Monroe dans l'état de New York, où se trouvaient autrefois une ferme commerciale et un hôtel. Le service à thé est orné d'un décor au décalque arborant des images représentant la foi, l'espérance et la charité -les trois vertus à la base du christianisme- ainsi qu'un motif populaire aux États-Unis à l'époque victorienne. Cet article offre une réflexion sur la façon dont le service à thé mis au jour dans un contexte rural est le reflet d'une distinction sociale, mais explore aussi la façon dont les occupants de la maison Spring House l'ont utilisé pour créer un sentiment de respectabilité en l'utilisant pour consommer le thé mais aussi en l'exhibant.

Introduction

Consumption is a powerful semiotic process that can define social identities and mask the realities of everyday life. At times, understanding how and why people consume mass-produced objects can be as rudimentary as any cause-and-effect relationship. At other times, consumption is a complex process that has no clear meaning, but must be deciphered in order to understand the many levels of meaning. As archaeologists, we attempt to conjure interpretation, not from inanimate objects, but from dynamic social agents embodying the hopes and desires of people who have long since passed.

This article discusses this interplay of consumption and intersecting identities as interpreted through a porcelain tea set recovered from the Spring House, a former

farmstead and hotel located in the town of Pittsford, Monroe County, New York. We define “set” as an assortment of matching ceramic wares (in this article, a teacup and saucer) that were likely acquired at the same time. Archaeological excavations were conducted at the Spring House site during the winter and spring of 2003–2004, in anticipation of the construction of retail and office space on the property adjacent to the Spring House (Powers and Teremy, LLC 2002, 2004). Originally built as a stagecoach and canal-packet stop, the Spring House structure and its grounds were used by successive owners in a number of different ways, including as a health resort, commercial-farm nursery and hotel, furniture shop, and restaurant, a function that it maintains today. For most of its existence, the site was operated

simultaneously as a commercial farmstead and hotel. Here, we focus on the site's function as a health spa and hotel.

The artifact assemblage consists of 1,472 artifacts, primarily architectural materials, glassware, ceramics, and other late 19th- to early 20th-century objects recovered from four 1 × 1 m test units, eight shovel tests, and nine trenches 1.5 m wide and between 6 and 15 m in length. Also recovered was a small assortment of personal artifacts, including a cameo, toys, brand-name patent-medicine bottles, a bone hairbrush, and a bone toothbrush. The artifact assemblage suggests the integration of the Spring House and its various occupants into the growing consumer culture, reflecting the desire among rural families for mass-produced material goods and their ability to purchase these objects (Parkerson 1995; Huey 2000; Austin 2007; Groover 2008). However, the tea set appears to be the only artifact that can be conclusively dated to the site's earliest occupation.

Current research into the interactions between 19th-century rural and urban areas reveals a dynamic, class-based view of a rural society consisting of wealthy landowners, well-to-do farmers, owners of rural industries, migrant farmers, and industrial laborers (Rafferty 2000: 126). Rather than viewing urban and rural as separate entities, a dialectical model presents urban and rural areas as inter-

dependent and linked by social and economic ties. Thus, consumption practices and social relations between the proprietors of the Spring House and the guests who visited it must be considered, as well as the complexities this creates for interpretation of the artifact assemblage. The research questions guiding this paper are as follows: What does the tea set suggest about the social and economic status of its owners? What are the meanings of the tea set and its motif? How do these artifacts reflect and construct the popular Victorian ideologies of Christianity, the domestic sphere, and genteel respectability? In addressing these questions, we use conceptions of desire and display operating as "technologies of the self" (Foucault (1988) to contextualize the tea set in broader networks of late capitalism, showing how structure affects habitus and practice in a rural area. We argue that the owner, in purchasing and displaying a tea set decorated with Christian imagery, wished to present him/herself not only as a good Christian, but also as a respectable member of the rural middle class.

History of the Spring House

Just south of the main road between the city of Rochester and the village of Pittsford, the Spring House is a former hotel and commercial farmstead, and currently a



Figure 1. Location of the Spring House on the 1920 United States Geological Survey map of Rochester. (Map by Kyle Somerville, 2017.)

restaurant (FIG. 1). A marker on the building once bore the date 1822 (Malo 1974). This date is also corroborated by a Rochester historian, who wrote that the Spring House was built “in 1822 at the point where the road to Pittsford crossed the newly-constructed Erie Canal, it accommodated both stage and canal travelers, and when this traffic declined advertised the health benefits to be derived from the water of a near-by sulphur spring” (McKelvey 1950: 23). On the other hand, construction dates of 1829 and 1830 are given by other surveys of the property (Powers and Teremy, LLC 2002), and a date of 1832 is recorded in the structure’s official record in the National Register of Historic Places (Brooke 1975). Despite the ambiguity of its construction date, we do know that the Spring House was built by Joseph Tousey (sometimes spelled “Towsey”), a Connecticut farmer and the grandson of a prominent Congregational minister. The Spring House served as a stagecoach and canal packet-boat stop before Tousey began to advertise the health benefits of a small sulfur spring located near the house (McIntosh 1877: 38). As the sulfur spring was not discovered until the late 1820s, the Spring House may have been Tousey’s attempt to capitalize on the popularity of mineral springs, such as those at Saratoga, Ballston, and Avon, as sources of healing, and on the growing passenger traffic of the Erie Canal (Brooke 1975: 5).

The Spring House is an imposing, two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half story, brick structure built in the Federal style. This architectural style is an admixture of the symmetrical building plans characteristic of Georgian architecture, with Adamesque Greco-Roman detailing, such as Palladian windows and sidelights, balustrades, detailed cornices and moldings, oval fanlights over entranceways, and other classically inspired flourishes (Malo 1974; Paradis 2003). Although the Spring House shared these basic characteristics of Federal-style architecture, its portico is much more prominent than others typical of the style and seems to foreshadow later Greek Revival architecture (Malo 1974:13).

In addition to the Spring House itself, Tousey built several structures near the springs, including a pavilion, bathhouses, bowling alleys, swings, and a fountain, all common features found on the health resorts in vogue in the United States during the mid-19th century (Chambers 2002).

Tousey’s first wife, Hannah Curtis, died in 1822, and in 1826 he married Laura Ann Spaulding at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Rochester (Rose 1916: 115). Joseph and Laura may have been the owners of the tea set, given its probable manufacture date of ca. 1825. Tousey died in 1848 and the property passed to a Mr. Norton, who sold it to Andrew Wheeler between 1848 to 1858 (Rose 1916). The Spring House appears to have continued as a health resort through at least 1855, when a guidebook to mineral springs in New York and Canada noted that at the “sulphurous springs of Pittsford ... there are bathing-houses and ample accommodations for visitors” (Bell 1855: 126). However, it also seems the Spring House did not operate as a spa for too long after the book’s publication, as no mention of either the Spring House or the local springs appeared in subsequent guidebooks (Moorman 1867, 1873; Walton 1873; Crook 1899). Moreover, an 1886 report by the United States Geological Survey listed the Pittsford Springs as “[o]nce a resort” (Peale 1886: 29). The spring-side structures were probably demolished between 1855 and 1867.

While Wheeler continued to operate the main house as a hotel, he also established a plant nursery on the property, beginning its transition to a commercial farmstead. According to the 1860 census the Wheeler household was quite large, consisting of Wheeler, his wife and their three children; two young, extended-family members; a live-in tutor; and five nursery laborers. By that time the property was also split into two parcels, separating the sulfur springs and the newly constructed New York Central rail line from the main house (Brooke 1975). The Spring House was a profitable enterprise for Wheeler, with his real estate worth valued at \$10,000

and his personal estate at \$5,000 (United States Bureau of the Census 1860).

After 1860, the property was acquired by Joseph Hall, a threshing-machine manufacturer and well-known trainer of trotting horses, who purchased several adjoining properties, where he had stables and a racetrack (J. B. Beers & Co. 1887; Brooke 1975). Hall was also involved in the burgeoning nursery industry in Rochester and may have extended his dealings to "Monroe Springs Place," as the Spring House had become known, described as "a hundred-acre farm with a large nursery" (Brooke 1975: 7). In 1865, Hall sold the property to Milton Olcott, a locomotive-lamp manufacturer with two adolescent children and an Irish-born housekeeper. He later pursued a number of different occupations related to agriculture, first as a cider and vinegar manufacturer, and later as a farmer (United States Bureau of the Census 1860; Boyd 1863; Drew, Allis & Company 1885). It is unclear what type of farming Olcott engaged in, but it appears that the property was somewhat profitable for him, as the 1870 census lists the worth of his real estate at \$10,000 and his personal estate at \$1,000 (United States Bureau of Census 1870); less than Wheeler a decade before but far beyond that of contemporaneous subsistence farms in the area (e.g., Day 1980; Bruno et al. 2007). Olcott owned the property until his death in 1886, and the property was deeded to Kendrick P. Shedd and Helen Olcott Sweet. Little is known about the various property usages after Olcott. Into the early 20th century, the property was operated as a hotel and tavern by a succession of different owners before coming into the ownership of Helen's daughter, Adelaide, sometime between 1887 and 1902 (Brooke 1975; Lathrop 1902). As suggested by an 1889 invitation to a "Social Party at the Monroe Avenue Spring House," however, the property continued to be a prominent landmark through the turn of the century (Pittsford Historian's Office 1889; United States Bureau of Census 1880).

The Spring House was acquired by Patrick Hackett, a Rochester saloonkeeper, and his wife

Elizabeth, in 1906 (Drew, Allis & Company 1907; Wilmer Atkinson Company 1918: 163). The Hacketts were listed in the 1917 Farm Directory for Monroe County as hotelkeepers of the "Spring Home Farm," and fruit and vegetable farmers with a 100 ac. parcel and several head of livestock (Orange Judd Co. 1917: 121). The Hacketts had one child, who was not listed on census records, but the household included four male, German-born farm laborers and a native-born, female domestic servant working at the property (United States Bureau of Census 1910). Hackett also ran an illegal speakeasy at the Spring House and ran afoul of excise officials (Democrat & Chronicle April 17, 1915; Spiegel 2000). By 1920, the Hacketts had only a single farm laborer boarding with them, perhaps reflecting a decline in profitable agriculture and/or illicit business at the Spring House (Parkerson 1995). In 1922, Hackett sold the building and the adjoining property to the University of Rochester, which in 1926 exchanged the adjoining property, now the current site of the Oak Hill Country Club, for another parcel closer to the city of Rochester (Brooke 1975; Powers and Teremy, LLC 2002). The Spring House fell into disrepair until 1931, when it came into the possession of the Pittsford Land Company. Crossman Crippen acquired and renovated the property in 1935, and ran a furniture and upholstery business there (American Legion 1937; Brooke 1975). Crippen's business failed soon after, and in 1940 the building passed to Anna Stubbs and Anne Colberg, who opened it as a restaurant. In 1959, the O'Neill family took over ownership of the restaurant and continued operation of the Spring House as such for several decades (Town of Pittsford, New York 2010). Since then, the Spring House has been operated as a restaurant under a succession of different owners. The structure was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

Excavations at the Spring House

In the winter of 2003 and the spring of 2004, Powers and Teremy, LLC, conducted Phase III

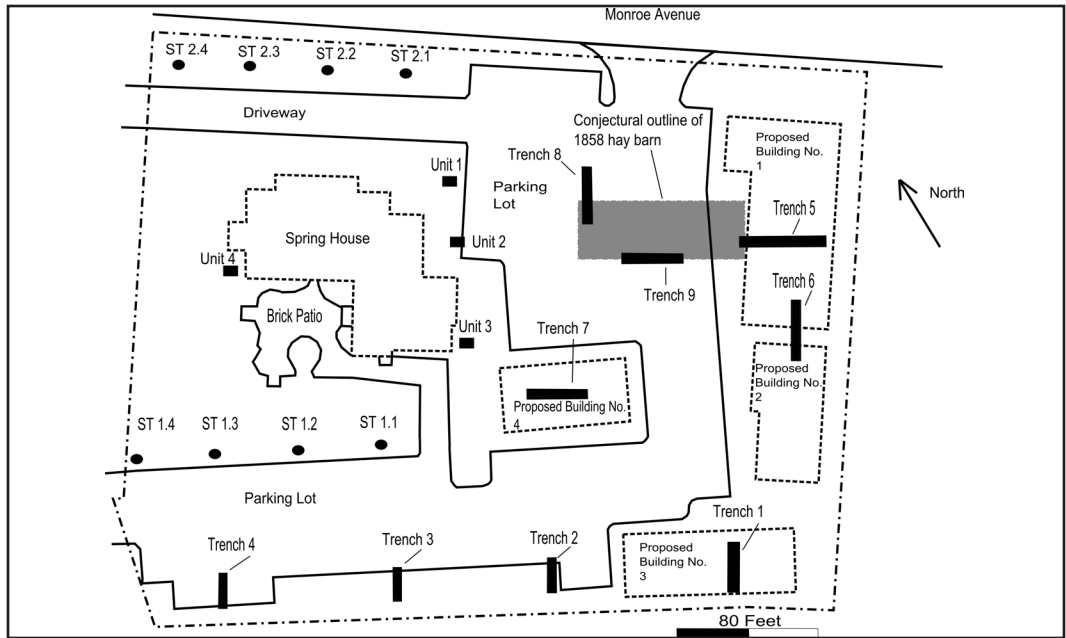


Figure 2. Map of excavations. (Map by Kyle Somerville, 2017.)

archaeological monitoring in anticipation of the construction of four new retail/office buildings, an embankment retaining wall, sidewalks, a new parking lot, and utilities adjacent to the Spring House (Powers and Teremy, LLC 2004) (FIG. 2). Throughout the course of cultural resource investigations encompassing Phases IA, IB, and III, a total of nine shovel tests, nine trenches, and four 1 × 1 m test units were excavated. Few artifacts were recovered from the trenches. A clamshell and the base of a modern glass bottle were recovered from Trench 1, and brick and wood fragments believed to be from the 1858 barn were recovered from Trench 9. However, these were not of sufficient size or quality to provide any further information on their origin. The test units had been placed in areas where construction of the retail complex might affect cultural resources. Unit 1 was placed near the foundation wall at the northeastern end of the Spring House (i.e., in the rear of the structure toward Monroe Avenue) and consisted of two levels and four natural layers of grayish brown to reddish brown loam: Layer 1/Level 1 measured from 0–14 centimeters below datum

(cmbd), Layer 1/Level 2 measured from 14–17 cmbd, and Layer 1/Level 3 measured 17–49 cmbd; Layer 2/Level 4 measured 49–60 cmbd. Unit 1 is believed to be within the former barn in which Hackett was said to have had his speakeasy. This unit produced most of the total

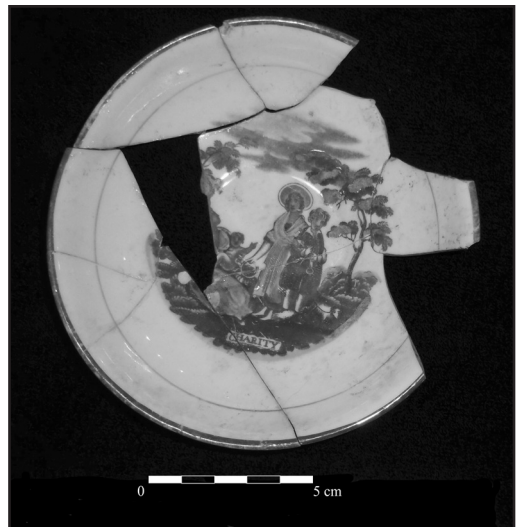


Figure 3. Plate from the "Faith, Hope, and Charity" tea set. (Courtesy of Powers and Teremy, LLC; photo by Kyle Somerville, 2017.)

artifact assemblage ($n=1,367$, 92.8%). In all, 1,472 artifacts were recovered during the Powers Teremy, LLC, Investigations; the assemblage was comprised primarily of glassware from canning jars, medicine bottles, and alcoholic-beverage bottles.

The Tea Set

The tea set was recovered from Layer 1/ Level 2–3 of Unit 1 (17–49 cmbd). The porcelain saucer measures 5.5 in. in diameter (14 cm); the cup measures 2.65 in. high by 3 in. across (6.7 × 7.6 cm). The vessels are part of a matching set that is decorated with a red transfer print overlaid with hand-painted polychrome decoration and over-glaze pink luster bands around the rims (FIGS. 3, 4, and 5).

When compared with other more expensive examples, the transfer prints and polychrome decorations of the set are seen to be blurry and poorly defined. The low quality of the transfer print and paste suggest that the set was an inexpensive purchase. We were unable to identify the direct manufacturer of the set as it does not have a maker's mark. Only the lot number "613" is painted on the

base of the saucer. Similar examples suggest that the Spring House set was produced in the first half of the 19th century in Sunderland, England. The motif was popular and was produced in several variations by a number of different manufacturers throughout the 19th century (Dyer 1908). The set was found in an archaeological context that included artifacts dating from the 1870s to the 1900s. Neither the tea cup nor saucer shows signs of utensil wear, which could suggest the items were damaged and discarded before they could be used, or that the set was curated and displayed rather than used in everyday practice. The curation of the objects could help to explain their presence within a late 19th-century assemblage.

The Motif: Faith, Hope, and Charity

The teacup exterior depicts a woman kneeling in front of an altar with her hands clasped, indicating that she is praying. On the altar is a book, probably a Bible leaning against a cross. The word "FAITH" is displayed underneath the scene. The opposite side of the teacup is mostly missing, but it appears to depict a woman leaning against an anchor and



Figure 4. Exterior of the teacup showing the side depicting "Faith." (Courtesy of Powers and Teremy, LLC; photo by Kyle Somerville, 2017.)

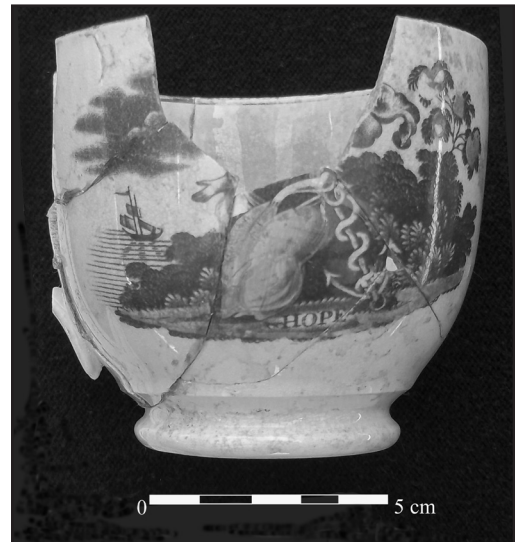


Figure 5. Exterior of the teacup showing the side depicting "Hope." (Courtesy of powers and Teremy, LLC; photo by Kyle Somerville, 2017.)

gazing out at a sailing ship. Under this scene is the word "HOPE." The saucer depicts a woman in a broad-brimmed hat and dress standing next to a young boy playing a musical instrument with an animal near his feet. The woman and boy stand to the left of a woman who is cradling a baby and looking up toward the sky. On a banner under this scene is the word "CHARITY." The decorations on these vessels are references to Christianity's theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity (the latter sometimes used interchangeably with "love"). These virtues are discussed by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:13, the closing line of which reads "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (Smith 1827: 750). These virtues cannot exist in isolation or be reduced to each other, but are present in each other (Niebuhr 1974). Indeed, they may be considered to come as a "set."

According to 19th-century Christian dogma, "faith" is a gift from God that enables humans to believe without doubt whatever God has revealed. Faith is the foundational basis of Christianity and the other two virtues (Gibson 1882: 275). One 19th-century social commentator suggested that faith was "a remedy for our natural defects and supplies the place of knowledge. It teaches us to believe without doubting, doctrines which we cannot comprehend, on the testimony of God, who has taught them" (Baines 1836: 2). In turn, faith creates "hope," in which people trust God's goodness and power, and "[i]t is this beautiful virtue of Hope that comforts us in all our troubles" (Gibson 1882: 278). Like faith, it was argued that hope is sustained through acts, such as not giving in to the "temptations" of despair and in asking for God's help (Baines 1836: 2; Gibson 1882: 278). "Charity" is considered the most important of the virtues, because it is believed that, while people enter into an understanding with God through faith, it is by charity (or love), as "through the love of God above all things, we love our neighbors as ourselves" (Gibson 1882: 278). Charity drives and binds all other virtues together

under the guiding principle of Christian behavior, the Golden Rule: to love God, and to love others as God does by providing for them, including those who wish to do us harm, and forgiving their offences against us (Delany 1833: 255). The general outline of this dogma is held by Christians of most denominations, although some variations in theological and metaphysical understandings exist.

In Christian theology, the "Three Virtues" are symbolized by a cross (faith), an anchor (hope), and a heart (charity/love). The meanings of these symbols are made clear by a contemporary writer: "He that hath faith cannot distrust, he that hath hope cannot be put from anchor, he that hath charity will not lead a licentious life, for love keeps the commandments" (Adams 1847: 4). We suggest that, since charity was considered to be the most important virtue, its symbol was purposely placed on the largest vessel of the tea set. The motif is a popular Victorian sentiment, and it is seen in a variety of contexts and objects, from cameos and tea services to gravestones (Prothero 2002; Peterson 2010). Additionally, in the 19th century the virtues were central principles of numerous organizations, including the Freemasons (How 1862: 408) and, in particular, the national temperance movement in the United States, which itself had a strong Christian foundation. Indeed, one early proponent of temperance described the movement using the iconography of the virtues: "For shield it has sincerity; for sword, the shining blade of evidence; for breastplate, *faith, hope, and charity* [emphasis added]" (Berlin 1859: 353). The possible connection between the motif on the tea service and the temperance movement's use of the three virtues should not go unnoticed, as several temperance societies were active in Pittsford and nearby Rochester after the Spring House opened in 1822/1832 (Rosenberg-Naparsteck 1992). For example, the Monroe County Total Abstinence Society counted over 2,000 members by 1838, while the Benevolent Total

Abstinence Society numbered over 4,000 (Perkins 1939). Membership in these societies cut across denominational lines, and followed other interests in moral reform emerging during the early to mid-19th century. Temperance proponents used lectures, exhibitions, editorials, theatrical performances, and statistics from poorhouses and prisons to illustrate the decline of the drunkard through the evil influence of alcohol. Moreover, the literal application of the virtues onto a tea set parallels the temperance movement's call for the consumption of tea as an alternative to alcohol (Reckner and Brighton 1999; Brighton 2008).

Tea Sets and Social Structures

Gaps in the documentary record and possible curation of the tea set make it difficult to determine to whom the set belonged, but the archaeological and historical evidence suggest it may have belonged to Joseph and Laura Tousey. The Spring House was not characterized by a single family occupancy, but rather a series of different households that participated in the local, national, and international markets in different ways. By the end of the 19th century most rural families had embraced the values of the urban middle class (including temperance), and, therefore, "[t]heir experiences aligned them far more with the bourgeoisie than with the laboring classes, thus offering a compelling answer to the question of why ... the capitalist transformation appeared so smooth in New York" (Huey 2000: 30). An interpretation of the set suggests a number of important observations about economic class and ideology in rural contexts in the early part of the 19th century.

The tea set was a social agent within this burgeoning consumer culture, as it reflected and (re)created the ideologies, desires, and intersecting identities of its owners. The motif is also identified with the Victorian middle-class focus on respectability. The individual person was the center of the Victorian social universe, as it was the

individual who embodied the core (middle-class) social values of hard work, morality, improvement of self, and competitiveness. These applied to both men and women, while the piety, purity, and submissiveness that constituted the cult of domesticity was the purview of women (Praetzellis and Praetzellis 2001: 646). These values were linked to a uniquely Victorian moral sensibility, borne in part, of an increasing awareness of social problems brought about by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. Thus, vices and flaws were considered to be the result of personal failings by the individual, but these could be rectified by the ordering of one's life through internalizing the values mentioned above. This moral sensibility was imparted through didactic persuasion (i.e., discipline) rather than physical coercion, as evidenced by the non-coincidental rise of institutions such as the penitentiary and public school during this time (Howe 1977: 20). The result of Victorian didacticism was "a person who would no longer need reminding of his duties, who would have internalized a powerful sense of obligation and could then be safely left to his own volitions" (Howe 1977: 24; Matthews 2010). This individual disciplining created a collective identity of white, Christian, middle-class homogeneity that was propagated through the didactic media of consumer culture (Archer and Blau 1993: 28).

These values formed the basis of gentility, a set of defined social codes with moral undertones prescribing proper social behavior, which was codified by writers in etiquette books, manuals for homeowners, and popular literature (Shackel 1993; Fitts 1999). Such social codes defined relations with other people, and, in order to be accepted as a member of a social class, one had to display the appropriate symbols and behaviors, such as speech and manners, which themselves were often underlain with material symbols (Leone 2005: 154–155). As a result, while "wealth affects the ability to purchase the correct symbols, it is the lack of appropriate symbolic behavior rather

than wealth which precludes membership in a particular class" (Fitts 1999: 40). Symbols serve a variety of functions in the maintenance of genteel identity. In a general sense, they are a means of communication, used to transmit stylistic messages that reflect adherence to a group's ideology and norms, and delineate and facilitate group cohesion (Wobst 1977; Mullins 1999). However, symbols manifested through material objects not only represent the projection of societal mores, but are also constitutive of their re-creation (Robb 1998). Understanding the use of symbols to define class, and of class-defining symbols, enables archaeologists to examine how people, like the Touseys, defined themselves and others, articulated class membership and boundaries, and transcended those boundaries and barriers (Archer and Blau 1993; Mullins 2011). In this regard, it can be seen that one tea set is not monolithic in its meaning, but is interlaced with the intersection of multiple identities: Christian, temperate, genteel, capitalist.

For example, the varying meanings of tea ware and tea service are discussed in Diana diZerega Wall's (1991) analysis of two New York City households. Wall (1991: 78–79) compares the tea-ware artifacts of the Robsons, an upper middle-class family, with the assemblage from a lower middle-class tenant family living on Barrow Street. In the upper middle-class Robson assemblage, there were two separate tea sets, both made of soft-paste porcelain, but each decorated differently. Wall (1991: 79) contends that the moderately priced, Gothic-style tea ware was part of a matching dining set used by the Robsons every day. Through using the matching wares for breakfast, lunch and dinner, Wall suggests that Mrs. Robson was using the tea ware to emphasize the collective identity of the family. Conversely, the other tea set, decorated in "pedestalled-shaped" and gilt-painted, had no matching tableware set, and was used as a mediator for a different form of social identity (Wall 1991: 76).

In the 1880s, dinner parties became popular social activities among the middle classes, and

these events, as well as the popularity of the afternoon tea, were arenas used to project a household's affluence. Wall (1991: 78–79) posits that, since the advent of the "cult of domesticity," that is, the view that the proper place for married women was within the household, these social events gave middle-class women one of their few opportunities to interact with their peers. In this regard, she argues that, rather than being a part of everyday use, the decorative tea ware was a social agent used to impress and compete with other upper middle-class women. As an individual socialized into the networks of 19th-century capitalism, Mrs. Robson used the decorative tea ware to underscore both the economic wealth and genteel respectability of her household. In this regard, Wall contends that the decorative tea set highlights the ideology of individualism, that is, the individual household in competition with other middle-class households for social and economic capital. This individuality and competition imbued through the decorative tea set are in stark contrast to the collective, familial identities that Mrs. Robson attempted to instill into her family through the everyday use of the less expensive, Gothic-style tea set.

On the other hand, the Barrow Street assemblage had only one example of a tea ware artifact, an inexpensive molded ironstone set. Wall (1991: 79) contends that the matching set was used every day within the lower middle-class household. Similar to the everyday set from the Robsons' assemblage, these tea wares were used to create a sense of unity within the family. Moreover, Wall complicates the interpretation by arguing that the set was also used when the tenants were entertaining guests. However, Wall (1991: 79) argues that, unlike the Robsons' usage, the undecorated ironstone tea ware was not used as a marker to impress and compete with other women, but was part of a ritual to develop a collective identity for women on the lower end of the economic spectrum. As opposed to competing with one another for social prestige

through decorative tea wares and proper social etiquette, the purpose of tea service for the Barrow Street residents and their guests was to create a sense of community and mutual support among lower middle-class families (Wall 1991: 79).

A similar example of the use of tea ware as a means to construct intersecting identities is found in Stephen Brighton's (2008) work at the Five Points District in New York City. Brighton examined a teacup with the depiction of Roman Catholic priest and temperance-movement leader Father Theobald Mathew. The motif and teacup were an expression of the growing 19th-century movement calling for the end of alcohol consumption by the Irish and Irish-Americans. The movement urged people to consume non-alcoholic beverages, particularly caffeinated drinks like tea, promoting sobriety as well as increased worker productivity (Brighton 2008: 24–25). Brighton (2008: 30–31) argues that because of the structural repression endured by the Irish and Irish Americans, being Others within an Anglo world, the promotion of sobriety and productivity were practices used to contest pejorative labeling. The teacup was part of this discourse, as people sought to highlight Irish Catholic temperance in order to challenge the stereotype of the drunken Irish, and it functioned as a means to construct a positive identity among a marginalized community (Brighton 2008: 30).

These examples demonstrate how tea ware and tea service were integral social agents used in everyday life. Though the meanings imbued through tea ware and service varied through time and space, the importance of the practice as a constructor of identity should not be lost when discussing the Spring House tea set. As a social agent, the tea set reflects how its owners viewed themselves, and also how others would have viewed the owners. This is important when it is considered that the Spring House is located in a rural context. There, a relational approach considers the formation and maintenance of class status as the ongoing negotiation between and within a class, and

how material culture helps to build and reinforce identities at the household level (Wurst 1999; Kruczek-Aaron 2002).

In the 18th century, tea service became a disciplinary tool used by practitioners to display conformity with ideologies of gentility and respectability (Shackel 1993). Material culture—like language, bodily movements, and actions—is a practice that is created, internalized, and used to adhere, reject, or operate in a “gray area” of societal structures (Olsen 2010: 5–6). Individuals are socialized into these structures and networks throughout their lives. Foucault (1988) discusses how, through a myriad of practices, individuals discipline themselves into structures, not only as performances for others that display the individuals' belonging, but for the individuals themselves as a means to underscore their own membership. Foucault suggests four types of technology: first, “technologies of production,” which allow individuals to create, alter, and manipulate things; second, “technologies of sign systems,” which allow individuals to use signs, meanings, and symbols within social networks; third, “technologies of power,” which influence the practice of individuals to conform to certain expectations of behavior and lead to the individual's objectification; fourth, “technologies of the self,” which allow individuals to influence, by themselves, or with the assistance of others, a host of socialized practices “to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault 1988: 16–49).

Foucault contends that all of the types of technology are often intertwined and operationalized at the same time and place. These four types of technology can be observed in the Spring House tea set. First, the tea set adheres to Foucault's concept of technologies of production, since through the owners' purchasing powers they were able to acquire the tea set; this in and of itself is an act of creation. The possible curation and display of the tea set adheres to the concept of technologies of sign systems, as the set's owners used the symbolic objects to create and

maintain an individual and collective identity. Second, as discussed throughout this article, the decorated tea set was imbued with a host of meanings and symbols; an emblem of gentility, a symbol of Christianity, and a possible connection to the temperance movement. In the purchase and possible curation of the set the owners were using socially constructed and collectively understood signs to advertise that they were socialized into these sign systems belonging to broader societal networks of capitalism, Christianity, and genteelism. Third, the acquisition, curation, and knowledge about the symbolism of the tea set are congruent with the technologies of power. Power is more than the ability to influence others, it is also the power to act; here the tea set displays the owners' purchasing power, their knowledge that the set is symbolically important, and that through its curation the set reflects adherence to social identity and membership. Thus, in this regard the tea set conveys the owners' objective power over and power to act in society. Finally, the tea set also operates as a technology of the self in that it both constructs and reflects the owners' membership in intersecting social networks.

The dualistic nature of the tea set as both reflector and constructor of identity is important to note. As a reflector, the tea set projects the ideologies of 19th-century Christianity, capitalism, and genteelism—and the manifestation of those ideologies through material culture. As a constructor, the tea set was used by the owners to construct a public identity of the owners' membership in society. Additionally, the tea set was used by the owners for themselves to construct their own hopes and desires of belonging to networks of Christianity, capitalism, and genteelism.

The consumption of goods is based on desire or "the imaginative construction one puts on some such attraction of disposition" (Graeber 2011: 494; Mullins 2011). Desire differs from needs, urges, and wants because it implies a longing for some kind of recognition from others, that is to say, it constitutes and is

constituted by social relations. Desire is always rooted in the individual's imagination and directs itself toward a social relation, real or imaginary, that itself entails the desire for recognition by an Other, and which forms the basis for an imaginative (re)construction of the individual self (Goffman 1959; Graeber 2011: 494).

Discussion

Several observations can be gleaned from this analysis of the Spring House tea set. First, the research confirms and reinforces earlier investigations into class and consumption at the Spring House and other rural sites in western New York, where consumption choices depended on broad factors, such as access to transportation networks and markets, the availability of consumer goods to rural households, and more specific, case-based factors, including family history, ethnicity, and individual domestic production that influenced a household's consumer behavior and participation in the larger consumer society (Austin 2007: 190). At the time of writing this tea set is unique among the farmsteads and rural domestic sites elsewhere in the region. As a health spa and later a large commercial farmstead and hotel, the occupants of the Spring House enjoyed a greater disposable income than most neighboring middling farmers (e.g., Bruno et al. [2007] and Day [1980]) and tenant laborers (e.g., Austin [2007] and O'Donovan and Wurst [2001–2002]). The tea set is a social agent and a manifestation of individual desire enacted through its purchase and display.

Second, it reflects documentary and historical accounts of the growing middle-class character of rural family life (Parkerson 1995; Parkerson and Parkerson 1998). By the end of the 19th century, rural families frequently sought to emulate the social values of their urban counterparts and, by association, their purchasing patterns as well. The tea set, and the values it is presumed to reflect, is very much a genteel, Christian, and urban item.

To digress briefly before turning to our third point, the tea set highlights the difficulty of tracing consumption and the ambiguity of the meaning of material culture for consumers. We will never know to what extent the purchaser “bought into” middle-class respectability, particularly temperance, or even Christianity, beyond the initial purchase of the tea set. It should be noted, however, that most of the liquor bottles recovered from the site date to the early 20th century, when the Spring House was operated as a speakeasy—not the context from which the tea set was recovered. It is also tempting to attribute the tea set to a female occupant, as mastery of the tea ceremony and the instilling of values into children, such as those displayed on the tea set, was primarily the domain of women during the late Federal and early Victorian periods (Wall 1991). However, the association of an object exclusively with the female or male constructs of public and private risks devolution into essentialism (Mullins 2011: 156–157). Given that the expression of gentility was the responsibility of men and women during the 19th century, the values expressed by the tea set, and indeed its very presence as a display item, are better examined as belonging to a household rather than as a discrete object associated with one individual.

The tea set is important in what it can reveal about rural society, as well as life at a combination hotel/commercial farmstead. It indicates the infiltration of genteel consumer culture into rural areas, if not an implicit knowledge of the tea-ceremony ritual itself. This is perhaps unsurprising, as rural areas had already thoroughly embraced capitalism and middle-class notions of respectability through consumption practices by the mid-19th century (Huey 2000; Austin 2007). However, the tea set is much more revealing, in that it suggests something of the nature of the interaction of desire, display, and practice between the proprietors of a rural business/home and the guests who frequented it. Individuals entering the presence of others often wish to find out information about them,

information that defines social situations and the agents who constitute them (Goffman 1959). Because guests at the Spring House may not have known the owners on a personal level, certain sources of information beyond their personal bearing would let guests know how the proprietors saw themselves and wished to be seen, as well as the kind of service guests might expect to receive. In displaying the tea set, the proprietors put on a semiotic performance for the guests, reflecting the ideas the owners wished to convey to guests about themselves, the type of establishment, as well as the kind of clientele the proprietors wished to attract.

On the other hand, although there is no apparent evidence of use wear, if in fact the set was ever put into everyday use, the effect would have been heightened through the active mobilization of the tea set in the tea ceremony. Thus, the performance of display, if not the actual performance of the tea ceremony itself, was an implicit statement by the proprietors to observers that they should be viewed as possessing the attributes of good genteel Christians, whether or not this was really the case (Goffman 1959). This performance may have worked, as an 1832 (about the time that the tea set was manufactured and likely purchased) visitor to the Spring House noted that the “proprietor has expended large sums of money to render this retreat not only conducive to health, but comfort also; and in the selection of a location of a house for the accommodation of visitors, and in fitting up the same, has manifested much taste” (Brooke 1975: 5).

This leads to our third and final point, which builds on the previous two points by delineating the nuances of these intersecting identities. The meaning of the motif on a tea set recovered in a rural context, given the design’s ubiquity among members of the Victorian middle class, indicates a knowledge of middle-class respectability. The desire to emulate this respectability was projected onto the owner by the tea set and its motif. As an outward reflection of gentility influenced by a

host of other potential intersecting identities and ideologies, the owner(s) of the Spring House attempted to convince outside observers, as well as themselves, that the establishment, and by extension its proprietors, was a respectable place where respectable people could gather.

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where he is researching the Famine period on Great Blasket Island, County Kerry, Ireland.

Department of History
Francis Marion University
PO Box 100547
Florence, SC 29502-0547
cbarton@fmarion.edu

Kyle Somerville is the Principal Investigator for Powers Archaeology, LLC. His research projects include faunal analysis, Victorian toys, and household consumption at rural sites in Western New York State.

180 Avon Road
Penfield, New York, 14625
kyle@powersarchaeology.com

Author Information

Christopher P. Barton is an assistant professor of archaeology at Francis Marion University. He is interested in archaeologies focusing on the intersectionality of class, gender, and race. Barton is currently a U.S. Fulbright Scholar at the National University of Ireland-Galway,