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## The Frontier, Food Remains, and Archaeological Meaning

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**THE FRONTIER, FOOD REMAINS, AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL MEANING**

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**A Thesis**

**Presented to**

**The Faculty of the Department of Anthropology  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia**

**In Partial Fulfillment**

**Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts**

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**by**

**Jeffrey Lee Watts-Roy**

**1995**

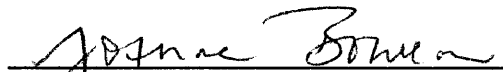
# APPROVAL SHEET


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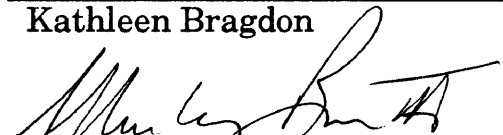
Master of Arts

  
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Approved, May 1995

  
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## **DEDICATION**

**This thesis is dedicated to my mother and grandmother, who have always made things possible, and to my editor, wife, and best friend, Diane.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores multidisciplinary perspectives and models that deal with frontier regions. Special attention is given to archaeological approaches that focus specifically on the American Frontier. As shortcomings of positivistic and processual approaches are covered, an alternative is offered via the anthropological paradigm of practice theory and interpretative archaeology. The context of 1750s frontier Virginia is used as a backdrop for the interpretation of an individual settler's actions. Dietary faunal remains reflect the use of the active symbol of hunting as a means of signaling identity and status.

**THE FRONTIER, FOOD REMAINS, AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL MEANING**

## INTRODUCTION

The American Frontier has been studied by numerous scholars who attempt to find within its romantic imagery some answers about how these geographical zones transform, stabilize, or do away with cultures and cultural institutions. Disciplines such as geography, anthropology, and history examine frontiers from different perspectives and with different goals in mind. What all have in common is a keen desire to make sense of frontier situations. The American Frontier is a relatively recent phenomenon and one that offers meaning about individuals and their roles in society, methods of survival in a new and oftentimes hostile environment, and the contributions of physical and mental hardships to a nation's identity.

Countless people left relatively safe and populated areas to live on the edges of society. These edges were as much mental as physical entities. The frontier has meant risk and reward to us and probably to those who have lived in previously unsettled regions, or regions settled by those who are different. There have always been frontiers of one type or another, and it could be argued that an essential part of an American identity is based on a certain limitlessness whether of spirit or physical geography. It could also be argued that what some see as wasteful, exploitative elements of western society may be attributed to conceptions of inexhaustible resources. Perhaps an identity based on material exploitation, though inevitably self-defeating, at least serves the purpose of signaling an *identity*.

Though much has been said and written about the American Frontier, recent understandings of human behavior in frontier contexts have given little attention to the action and interaction that took place among individuals who lived there. Little has been said about who these people

were. Archaeology, particularly, has focused in recent years on pattern recognition studies: The ways people settled, ate, prospered, have been emphasized via functional and systemic models. Studies seldom account for the dynamics of frontier conditions in any setting with conflict and symbolic models of interpretation.

This paper shows how practice, an overarching theory that accepts that human actors have a role in affecting their ecological and social environment in meaningful ways, combines with interpretative archaeological methods to shed light on contexts where symbolic interaction and identity-signaling took place. With the help of food remains excavated from a 1750s Virginia frontier habitation, I make qualitative statements about an individual's short-lived frontier experience. In the context of migrations, settlement, ethnic interaction, exploitation, war and class conflict, an individual signals to his compeers an identity of prestige, rank and leisure. This information is reflected in the faunal remains from the site and the symbolic value they possessed within the context mentioned above. The purpose of interpretative comments is to provide an impetus for meaningful discussions about action and meaning. These statements are to be interpreted and re-interpreted in the attempt to translate this action and meaning. What is proposed in this paper eschews pattern recognition, neo-evolutionary descriptions, and general, functional theories of human *adaptation* and settlement.

## CHAPTER I

### **Theoretical Perceptions of the American Frontier**

#### *Introduction*

As an object of study, the North American frontier has intrigued many. Interest in the effects of “the frontier” can be seen as early as the eighteenth century when writers attempted to attribute the development of the democratic mind to the apparent limitlessness of attainable land (Lewis 1984). This thought transformed over time and was illuminated into “the Frontier Thesis” as proposed by historian, Frederick Jackson Turner (1893). Turner felt compelled to write his thesis after he learned the 1890 Federal Census was the last to count people living on the “Frontier”. As such an integral part of everything “American”, Turner feared that the frontier and the values it inspired would soon be forgotten. Following Turner’s reasoning, the pressures of society normally propagated an under class, the American frontier provided space and freedom that in the minds of the citizens was always available and exploitable thus furthering an inexorable frontier spirit. For Turner, the individual “mountain-man, back woodsman, or explorer” (1893:214) found that the frontier lands allowed freedom from “government, aristocracy, urbanity” (1920:273-274) during their quests for a “...plain, frugal, civilized life” (1893:214). The lack of constraints from external, political sources allowed the settlers to take on the wilderness unencumbered (1920:269) and shape the mutable, unorganized society as they saw fit--this

change, or frontier process of adaptation, is what Turner called “Americanization” (Billington 1966:2; Klose 1964; Otto 1989). Undeniably, Turner’s most pronounced frontier legacy is his derivation of the countless character traits incorporated into what could be called an American *ethos*. When reading works written or influenced by Turner one repeatedly finds the following descriptors: “individualistic, innovative, industrious, isolationistic, inquisitive, materialistic, enterprising, coarse, rugged, restless, resourceful, heroic, democratic, capitalistic, egalitarian, optimistic, nationalistic, asocial, and self-reliant, to name a few (Jakle 1977; Jordan and Kaups 1989; Klose 1964; Mitchell 1972; Moore 1957; O’Brien 1984; Webb 1964). As well as adjectives that follow modern, culturally valued traits there are the antinomies such as the following from Webb (1964:60): the frontier got the “...outcasts, the loafers, and the criminals” with “...the industrious and ambitious workers” as well.

### *Multidisciplinary Definitions of Frontier*

Geographers have led the way in providing clear frontier studies terminology. Mikesell notes that initially geographers became interested in the “historians’ frontier thesis” for reasons of comparison and delineation of geographical language (1960:62). A thorough discussion of the nature of frontiers and boundaries is provided by Kristof’s (1959) work on the subject. Here terms are delineated and the validity of frontier studies is discussed. Kristof defines the *frontier* as an “area that is part of the whole, but ahead of the hinterland” also known as “foreland, borderland, or march” (1959:1). Whereas the boundary may be seen as a line, the frontier (for geographers whose scope is global) may be interpreted as an area, or zone (Mikesell 1960; Prescott 1965); more specifically, “frontier is an integrating factor--a zone of

transition from the sphere of one way of life to another and represents forces which are neither fully assimilated to nor satisfied with either” (Kristof 1959:273). Followed later by anthropology, which was greatly influenced by cultural geographic comparative studies, geography paved the way in examining frontiers of “inclusion” (assimilation) such as Roman, Arab and Spanish societies and frontiers of “exclusion”--the English in North America, Australia and South Africa, to better understand the frontier “process” as it occurred world-wide and in many forms of colonial expansion (Mikesell 1960:65). The result for all interested disciplines has been a somewhat reflexive use of the terminology and limited ethnocentrism in frontier studies.

Although historians have owned the frontier thesis (Mikesell 1960), their interpretations have been greatly influenced by work in both geography and anthropology. Geographers took frontier definitions to new limits and applied them to other nations, and situations. In so doing, a comfortable use of their work was applied to the long standing debate over exactly what role the frontier has played in influencing American society. When historians who examine the frontier discuss catchment areas, central place models and dendritic settlement patterns, they are not using the terminology of historiography. What exists in some history-based analyses of the frontier are amalgamations of social scientific approaches. The major shift amid historical writing about the frontier is the critical stance taken by some to be suspicious of the romantic images perpetuated in historical depiction of frontier influence (Moore 1957).

Anthropological approaches, including approaches offered by the subfield, archaeology, have centered around culture and how culture groups transform in frontier situations--the “loci of innovative behavior” (Miller 1984:11); the area where this transformation occurs generally receives secondary attention

(Green and Perlman 1985:4). Carried over from geographic definitions, Waselkov and Paul (1981) define the *frontier* as the place “where societies meet in a zone of mixture and interaction, the transitional area” (311). It is this change effected by human and culture contact that compels anthropology to consider frontier areas. Since many cultural anthropologists and archaeologists view the frontier as a product of economics, an addition to the definition is the impermanence, repetition, and a “sequential pattern of change” that occurs (Lewis 1984; O’Brien 1984:13). This is evinced in anthropology’s concern for the causes of expansion and attempts at explaining the subsequent effects of this expansion.

For the purposes of this paper I will define frontier in the following manner:

frontier--a less populated geographical zone on the edge of an expanding society, culture, or specific ethnic group, where interaction takes place between individuals and groups, cultural constraints are loosened and cultural freedoms (viz. symbolic freedoms) enhanced, and this outer edge may or not be intrusive to established cultures and their practices, but certainly is open to subjective interpretation at any temporal phase.

### ***Theoretical Perspectives and Methods***

Methods are indicative of attempts to define and understand certain phenomena at the theoretical level. The approaches discussed here all function under some central paradigm or theoretical stance and have changed considerably during this century. Keeping archaeology in mind, much of what has been written about the frontier falls under the auspices of the *New*, or *processual* approaches. The views espoused by proponents of these mindsets are typically positivistic in theory, empiricist in method and offer finite conclusions to archaeological problems.



Those who have followed the “ecological perspective” in geography and anthropology have contrasting views from those discussed above, especially in the positivistic nature of the former’s statements and goals. Proponents of “processual” approaches look for the process and form in settlement and have espoused such paradigms as central place theory, ecological distribution theory and the application of plant and animal ecological models (e.g. “wave of advance model”) to human settlement (Ammerman and Cavalli-Sforza 1979:278; Hudson 1969; Miller 1984). These approaches are primarily deductive, environmentally deterministic, and have links to cultural ecology and cultural materialism thus bolstering “objective” works devoid of “generalizations” about the frontier area (Mikesell 1960; Prescott 1965). Processual approaches also give much credence to patterns and the idea that human behavior is a patterned response to its environment. Common quests within this viewpoint are the detection of pattern within settlement, subsistence, migration, and “livelihood patterns” [beyond subsistence] (Mitchell 1972:462), and quantitative methods such as mathematically derived equations to explain “settlement process” (Hudson 1969:373). This mindset also looks to system for answers to broad questions about culture groups and societies--the needs of society are sought over the needs of specific individuals (Flannery 1976; Grossman 1977). Within industrial and state societies adaptive foci center on “relationships within large-scale economic and political institutions” or “collective patterns,” which are beyond the individual and the individual’s *choice* of action within their society (Britan and Denich 1976:56-57).

Archaeologists have looked at the frontier as an interactive meeting point between disparate cultures or worldviews (Green and Perlman 1985). Some archaeologists feel that in North America too much attention has been given

to the intrusive European cultures and too little to the indigenous people (Waselkov and Paul 1981: 314). For some, behavior is best observed within the spheres of political and economic settlement (Green and Perlman 1985; Lewis 1976; Lewis 1984; Waselkov and Paul 1981); while for others, ecological determinism and human-environment relations (Honerkamp 1980; Justeson and Hampson 1985; Miller 1984; O'Brien 1984; Rubertone and Thorbahn 1985) are best observed and offer the best explanations in frontier situations. What both general themes share is their concern for pattern in frontier settlement and the assumption of patterned human behavior.

The ecological models are highly evolutionary in tone and operation. People behave in relation to the environment in patterned ways. In Miller's (1984) analysis of seventeenth century subsistence change in the Chesapeake, he refers to a culture's "adaptation" to the environment as "selection" (11), and "reproductive success" is when a frontier population's demography resembles that of the homeland's (25). Within a discussion of agrarian *vs.* industrial frontiers (and how differences arise) one author uses the term "speciation" to explain differentiation (Hardesty 1985:214). Another approach with similar terminology and goals is the "catchment area" concept. Though first a zoological model, this approach when applied to humans defines the "economic range of a site" based on the location of patches of resources--the closer the resources then the less likely the people will be highly mobile (Rubertone and Thorbahn 1985:233). It is assumed in many of these approaches that focus on culture as an adaptive system will allow the investigation and identification of "culture change processes" (Miller 1984:6).

Other archaeological studies of frontier sites have made use of the "pattern recognition" method as explained by South (1977a; 1977b; 1978). Artifact classes are established and spatial patterns (frequency distributions) of these

classes are sought using various statistical manipulations based on the artifacts' relationships in the ground. The goal of this type of analysis is to mark the patterns that make up "laws of culture process" and "past cultural systems" (South 1978:266). South developed an artifact distribution pattern for the frontier homelot (South 1977a) while others have taken this approach further by dealing specifically with broad patterns of frontier settlement (Honerkamp 1980; Lewis 1984).

Many frontier studies have focused on one distinct European ethnic group, ignoring the well-documented interaction that occurred. Speaking of the dynamic nature of the frontier as an "open social system," Green and Perlman stress the importance of criteria in determining why certain areas were colonized over others via political and economic expansion and how the multicultural nature of the American Frontier affected the native population (1985:4-5). The goals of those who see the archaeological frontier as being dynamic, open, and integrative are to establish models which "...explain regularities and exceptions..." beyond ethnocentric settlement pattern studies (Waselkov and Paul 1981:316).

Appearing to be in an inchoate phase, archaeological considerations of the frontier still seek broad, generalizing theories to explain what happens on societal boundaries. To date, the theory associated with frontier studies has been surprisingly static. Views of this nature, when applied to the frontier, have fallen short of offering any thorough interpretations of human action and human meaning. At some point archaeological frontier studies must go beyond postulation, beyond renaming the dated concepts and looking so broadly at the frontier that anything can be guessed via generalization.

### ***The Theoretical Importance of Frontier Studies***

Anthropologists, or more specifically, archaeologists, have traditionally viewed culture and its components as being generally systemic and frequently use the terminology of the systems approach (Trigger 1989:334). Systems function like machines and when applied to human elements one merely defines the rules that determine the machine's function. Defining the rules of the system ( or finding the pattern) leads to explanation of the system. This relatively static view of culture allows problematic situations like the frontier a niche in *change foci*. Still, in their adaptation of change to static models, archaeologists have tended to use neo-evolutionary models based on stages and linear development, or in systemic jargon, positive feedback (Trigger 1989:303). Change has been explained as being the transition from one level of development to the next (Hardesty 1985). Macro views of frontier settlement must focus on grand processes such as adaptation to the ecosystem, repetitive pattern in settlement, and resource extraction economies. Like geographers, anthropologists have developed approaches which give communities or the "description and distribution of elements within communities" more regard (O'Brien 1984:15). Even studies focusing on community level frontier settings fail to squeeze people into the processes that are defined and supposedly took place there.

Topics dealing with the importance of the frontier have not involved ideological aspects of culture, nor has a substantial amount of work been done on open cultural "systems" interacting on boundaries. Waselkov and Paul (1981) have given this area some attention and in so doing have gone beyond the quest for pattern. The importance of frontier situations for them is in tracing "...the changes which occur in various aspects of competing culture..." to point out "...regularities and exceptions in terms of specific models of

frontier dynamics” (Waselkov and Paul 1981:316). The variability that occurs within, what some feel to be, any cultural exchange, internal or external, has been thought to be endemic to frontiers (Green and Perlman 1985:9). Hardesty concludes that what is truly lacking is an explanatory tool that allows for the “creative” behavior of people in response to the frontier, or anywhere else (1985:226).

### ***Interpretive Approaches***

Though pushed to the wayside by the desire to make anthropology a *science*, distinct modes of inquiry developed over the course of the twentieth century that made symbols, action and symbolic interaction the focus of attention (respectively, Dolgin, Kemnitzer, and Schneider 1977; Bourdieu 1977; Blumer 1962). Within sociology and anthropology much has been written about these topics; points derived from these perspectives will be addressed in this paper, namely, the application of practice theory as an overarching paradigm for understanding human action and the roles of individuals in affecting their social world. More specifically, interpretative archaeology addresses some of the micro-elements of practice as it is applied to interpreting meaning, context, and material culture.

The notion of system perpetuating itself provides nothing in the way of understanding how “human actions reproduce social institutions” (Barrett 1987:469). When these models of stability do change (evolving social systems as they are considered), it includes a system out of human control and one that “...relegates the human actor to a passenger on the historical trajectory which has imprisoned her/him” (Barrett 1987:470). This overly simplistic rationale does not take us closer to understanding human action, nor does it take us further away--it merely leaves us befuddled in the *a posteriori* morass

of pattern much like the process/pattern models would have their human actors.

Leaving the individual out of discussions of “adaptation,” economic pursuit and social organizing seems inane. In his critique of functional and adaptation models, Roscoe notes that within such models “...the human agent is left dimly sketched at best, emerging little more than a radically denatured automaton responding mechanically to its own or its system’s ‘needs’ ” (1993:112). It is conceivable that inevitably the grand models would have to consider individual action as fitting in somewhere--explanation does not equal prediction (Trigger 1989:337; Yoffee and Sherratt 1993). The recent move to place individuals into social action and structure indicates such a major paradigm shift--the result of strong and valid critiques against “positivist/empiricist discourse” (Hodder 1991; Shanks and Tilley 1992:103).

The goals outlined by Lewis developed mainly from settlement pattern studies (which technically can not be called a theory; see Handsman 1983), but the analytical underpinnings suggest a basis in positivist philosophy. This problematic philosophy has attempted unsuccessfully to make the study of humans a “hard science” by applying elements of predictability (hypothetico-deductive method) and an objective distancing by the researcher. Consider the following quotation by philosopher Henryk Skolimowski:

“Our world-view and our lifestyles are intimately connected. The mechanistic conception of the universe, in the long run, *implies* and *necessitates* a human universe that is cold, objective and uncaring. As a consequence, human meaning atrophies. The very language of science and its categories do not allow for the expression of the meanings of our humanness.” (1992:14) [emphasis original].

Criticisms leveled at processual archaeology usually adhere to the quotation above. Johnsen and Olsen note that archaeology, from roughly 1960-1980, attempted to model the natural sciences with “methodological and theoretical

devotions to...hypothesis testing, formulations of law-like assumptions, and an unquestioned faith in cumulative growth of scientific knowledge” (1992:419). When the goal of theory is to assign meaning to human action through interpretation, its main enemy is one that avoids meaning, falsely eliminates subjectivity, and claims there is no such thing as relativity. As Hodder puts it, processual archaeology is “blind to its own ideologies” (1991:12). Shanks and Tilley (1992) refer to the theory of the New archaeology as being part of a “closed philosophy” (103). They see this limited scope of humans as having “one view of reality” and too much “faith in testing strategies” (103), thus creating an “enlightened false consciousness” by eschewing “attempt[s] to understand the past in social terms...” (Tilley 1993:4). Much of this thought can be traced back to the views endorsed by cultural materialists and cultural ecological models; these are weak in accounting for spontaneity in human behavior and attribute “external” influences to the shaping of human behavior (Trigger 1989:350,339). Similarly, a long tradition of positivistic influence may be noted in processual archaeology’s penchant for the general over the particular (macro *vs.* micro).

#### *Alternatives to Process and Pattern*

As Hodder notes, it is ironic that archaeology has such a paradox as its crux, that is, “objects dug up are concrete and real things, yet it is so difficult to ascribe any meaning to them” (1989:66). Finding a place for meaning in archaeology is what most of the critics above attempt in their work. In contrast to processual archaeology, post-processual archaeology considers the effects of history and tradition on the researcher (Johnsen and Olsen 1992) and the historical conditions of the context being investigated (Barrett 1987:471). The important aspect of this shift in focus is admitting

subjectivity and placing strong emphasis on *context*. Hodder argues that processual archaeology focuses too much on method and tries to account for change in large models at the expense of the interpretation of internal, contextual meanings (1991:8).

Interaction at the human level can take limitless forms and postprocessual archaeology attempts to ascribe meaning to it. An excellent case study is provided by Marc Stevenson (1989) in his analysis of a twentieth century gold rush community. This research involves a contextual study of “identity-signaling social groups” and the interaction that occurred between them. Symbols, roles, and power are not static archetypes in works such as this. Individual choice plays a role in interaction as it allows for new courses of action in response to association and differences (Hodder 1991).

### ***Practice***

Though not called *practice* at the time, approaches with the same basic tenets as practice theory developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by scholars such as George Herbert Mead, William James, and Charles Horton Cooley (Watts-Roy 1994:22). At this time those who considered individuals apposite to an understanding of society focused on the actor as *self*; of primary importance was how selves interacted with one another and the social world at large (Watts-Roy 1994). Dirks, Eley and Ortner find emphasis on practice in the works of Marx, Weber, Gramsci, and Sartre (1994). Current strains of practice came about during the seventies when the tenets of feminist theory became more prevalent, and when the field of linguistics sought alternatives to structuralism (Ortner 1984). Discussion of topics like *choice* and *action* became more popular in the



seventies and even more so when structural Marxism began to wane in the late seventies (Bourdieu 1977; Britan and Denich 1976; Ortner 1984).

Also referred to as action, interaction, praxis, activity, experience or performance (Ortner 1984:144), Ortner defines practice simply as “anything people do” (1984:149). The focus of this paper addresses issues of action and interaction between individuals and social groups; therefore, we must limit this definition to examine “the creativity of individual actors in the generation of social practices” (Roscoe 1993:113). The unique aspect of this approach is its acceptance of a larger, existing complex wherein individual action occurs and has the potential to change this system; this places equal emphasis on macro and micro foci. Early practice theorists and contemporary ones acknowledge that there exists a larger structure (not the deep, universal patterns of structuralism) that constrains and “sets conditions” for the actions of individuals (Ortner 1984:146). Shanks and Tilley (1992) place the individual in an action perspective: “Individuals are competent and knowledgeable while at the same time their action is situated within unacknowledged conditions and has unintended consequences” (116). Also referred to as a *system* (Ortner 1984:148), Roscoe defines it as a “complex of rules and resources that shape but do not determine social action” (1993:113). Also he points out that “social change is inherent in every social act” (113).

To further situate the individual in social practice and social structure and the dialectic relationship that exists between the two, the concepts of *structuration* (offered by Giddens [1979]) and *habitus* (by Bourdieu [1994]) should be explained. Structuration is the means by which structures change—they are not “hermetic and permanently fixed entities but are in a constant process of reproduction and transformation in practice” (Shanks and Tilley 1992:128). Individuals use social structure and in doing so change or

reproduce the structure. Specific results occur when structure and action produce consequences (Molm 1990:427). An individual experiences structuration over the course of their life. Much of structuration involves knowing one's context and learning how to get by day to day. Power to Giddens is the ability or the "capacity" to alter "cultural categories" (Roscoe 1993:113).

*Habitus* is a word used by Bourdieu to indicate one's place in a social system, or a member of a class, which shares with all of its members "modes of classification, appreciation, judgment, perception and behavior" (Turner 1991:516). It also means "strategy generating principles enabling agents to cope with unforeseen situations" (Hodder 1992:74). *Habitus*, essentially, is that part of human behavior which Westerners refer to as practical knowledge; these are elements that can not be defined easily because of their random nature. *Habitus* is imbued knowing attained when an "actor grows up, and lives everyday life within...spatial and temporal forms..." where "...s/he comes to embody those assumptions, literally and figuratively" (Dirks, Eley and Ortner 1994:13).

In sum, practice focuses on the knowledgeably enabled individual, endowed with cultural codes from enculturation and rearing, as s/he performs daily routines and experiences interaction that situates meaning. One's identity is effected through interaction and performing practices. The subject learns to understand social position through symbolic interaction with others (Shanks and Tilley remind us that "all action is social action" 1992:124), thus reinforcing or challenging knowledge about how and where to act according to the existing, yet mutable structure of the system. This system is comprised of the schemes that are ["embodied...within institutional, symbolic, and material forms"(Ortner 1984:148)] performed by actors. "Actions are

performed in one manner rather than another because the social world is fundamentally a symbolically structured reality and inherently meaningful” (Shanks and Tilley 1992:126).

### *The Practice of Signaling*

A discussion of interaction between social groups is pertinent to the goals of this paper. For this discussion, I have relied on some thoughts offered by Fredrik Barth (1969) and Anya P. Royce (1982) in their analysis of ethnic boundaries and identity. Their views, though surface-skimmed here on the participation of individuals in group membership, are important when keeping a practice perspective in mind.

Barth’s notions of identity within a group centers around “cultural ascription” or one’s most “general identity” (1969:13). This refers to the relationship of identity in one’s habitus, or the way one categorizes oneself by their association with an ethnic identity. To be a member of a group means that a demarcation of some sort must exist. For humans who must rely on more than phenotypic indications, this display of uniqueness and difference is often manifest through features such as signals and signs--dress, language, style of life, etc. (Barth 1969:14). Added to these signs is the complex regulating relationship, or structure, where identification takes place. It is within this “organization” that performance of basic values and morals takes place and is judged (Barth 1969:14,131). Being action oriented beings, people alter their context at will to “manipulate other individuals or situations” to achieve desirable end results (Royce 1982:1-2). It is the interaction of individuals exhibiting necessary traits and with common desires that constitutes a group (Barth 1969:12).

The cohesion of an ethnic or other group is dependent on observable sets of “signs, symbols, and underlying values” that assume distinctiveness (Royce 1982:7). This need for tangibles that signify identity is reflected in the value ascribed to material culture. Symbolic value attributed to material elements of culture has restrictive value in who has knowledge of meaning and how this meaning signals “concrete evidence” of identity (Royce 1982:8). Differences may be seen between two groups of similar status when each hold different “standards” of meaning for shared material (Barth 1969:17). Frontiers are excellent areas to observe interaction between groups of profound cultural difference, or groups with cultural resemblance--like those having similar internal and external constraints but practicing different standards (Trigger 1991). The symbols carrying the most power are defined through interaction between groups, or individuals (Royce 1982:148).

### *Interpretative Archaeology*

An archaeology that embraces the individual and individual action in regard to social “system” has the potential to learn more about the past than any theory/model to date. Where New Archaeology instilled a rigid extractive methodology, the post-processual archaeological approaches find importance in clarifying the overall reasons for digging and developing tools to extract as much meaning per context as possible. It is important to note that while the processual element of archaeology has been short on theory and strong on methodology, the opposite situation exists for post-processual archaeology (Hodder 1991). Furthermore, the extractive methodologies of control derived under New Archaeology should not be eschewed by future generations. Clearly, in research where context must be rendered precisely, tight control

on how material is extracted from the ground is capital. The overall remodeling of our interpretive scope should be the only profound change.

As Christopher Tilley (1993) notes: "Facts of nature lend themselves to taxonomies; facts of culture require discourse" (5). Interpretative archaeology, like archaeologies prior, attempts to get at the past through the study of cultural, material remains. The goal of interpretation is to understand aspects of the archaeological record, or the past, that do not make immediate sense (Tilley 1993). Like a book lying open before us, a site, a feature, an architectural structure, may be read and re-read, interpreted and re-interpreted as is text. According to Dirks, Eley and Ortner (1994), all of "culture is a text, not so much because it looks like one, but because it can be read as one" (36). It is through this in-depth subjective reading that "culturally emergent" properties are ascribed (Tilley 1993:6). It is very important that the subjectivity of the researcher, the "theoretical frames of reference, schemes of imagination and perception" be taken into account (Tilley 1993:6). This means that when viewed through the eyes of more than one person, the interpretations might be quite different and thus problematic for prescribing significance. Offering boundaries around what is and is not acceptable interpretation are the norms of scholarship, including cogency, lucidity and "lack of serious contradictions" (Tilley 1993:4). Because this form of interpretation accepts subjectivity and relativity, but is not limited to the polar arguments created by these terms, the readings can continue indefinitely (Hodder 1989; Shanks and Tilley 1992; Tilley 1993). This task is formidable in the sense that all text has many voices and many meanings--it is essentially polysemous (Hodder 1989).

However, a methodology that attempts to extract as much meaning from *text* as possible is well underway. Formulated by interpretive archaeologists

and theorists, this method is outlined as an “interpretive strategy” and the following is taken directly from Tilley (1993): The strategy determines (1) what kinds of evidence are taken into account; (2) what counts as relevant facts; (3) what counts as relative counter evidence; (4) the manner in which the evidence is articulated in discourse; and (5) the kinds of conclusions that can be reached which are acceptable (1993:7). The aim here is to interpret and “reconstruct a semiotics of meaning” in regard to “...past and present sociohistorical relations” (Tilley 1993:8). This brings the discussion back to the issue of reading culture and its residues as text.

### *Hermeneutics*

Hermeneutics, the study of the methodology of interpretation, concentrates on a form of textual interpretation where the author of the text is long removed. The central question to a hermeneutic approach places less emphasis on what is being perceived and asks instead how we are perceiving it (Johnsen and Olsen 1992). This concerns interpreting the past in relation to the present, or looking for “past traces in the present context” (Johnsen and Olsen 1992:420). This method involves a thorough understanding of the context of research and knowing as much as possible about the context where the object (thought) was produced. A hermeneutic circle is the interpretation and reinterpretation that adds new knowledge to the general knowledge one has acquired in life. This circle closes when an understanding of what the new knowledge means in its context makes sense in relation to one’s general knowledge.

Speech, writing, discourse all must be interpreted in context, that is, to remove an object or idea from context is to not only render it mute, possibly, but to snatch it from its original, intended meaning. To understand action

and/or meaning, context must be made clear. Because all text has limitless boundaries and meanings, it must be placed somewhere in time and space (Hodder 1989; Olsen 1991). It is within context that people "...make and re-make their knowledge of how to act..." (Barrett 1987:469), whether this placing be present or past. Contexts, according to Tilley (1993), "include both the interpreting archaeologist(s) and the questions asked and entities existing in the archaeological record" (9). More simply put, the context of an object [or action, including comprehension] is "the totality of its relevant environment" (Hodder 1987:4-5); this means relevant to meaning.

### *Material Culture*

Moving away from solely functional attributes, material culture should now be seen as an integral part of the essence of human action and meaning. The symbolic and tangible nature of material culture may be manipulated, adorned, and/or obscured to regulate, mystify, form and/or harm individuals. Interpretative archaeology recognizes material culture as playing the part of mediator between ideas and the implementation of these (Shanks and Tilley 1987). Material culture may have, in certain circumstances, an active effect in demarcating and maintaining social, cultural and ideological boundaries; when people interact, material culture "actively mediates intentions, strategies, attitudes and ideologies" (Shanks and Tilley 1987:107). It is always the product of "meaningfully organized activity" (Hodder 1991:12) and thus may be seen as the necessary link between structure, context, and action (Hodder 1989:72). Thus, "material culture is intimately linked with social praxis and it is through praxis that it comes into being" (Shanks and Tilley 1987:114).

Clearly, accepting that material culture is polysemous and multivocal allows for new levels of interpretation. An object's "function" has been broadened to include symbolic and ideological elements, different from systemic roles in respect to meaning and context. The recent attention on the place material culture has in anthropological archaeology practice can best be summed up by Tilley (1993):

"The concern is to understand the conventions and operation by means of which material culture, conceived as a significative practice, produces meaning effects in relation to social" (5).

Social relations must be translated from material remains. It is within these remains that meaning and active structure are carried. As Shanks and Tilley (1992) point out, if it is the meaning of the quotidian we pursue, this is "embedded in the materiality of day to day existence" (132).

As for its application, the theoretical perspective adopted for this research allows the consideration of an altogether new avenue in frontier studies. By placing emphasis on individual practice and the individual's creative role in e/affecting social structure, this approach attempts to gain insight about the life of one person on the mid-eighteenth century Virginia frontier. This attention on the micro in relation to the macro creates questions about each, in relation to each other. Research potential ramifies and new horizons of interpretation eventually answer questions about the nature of social structure. For example, by examining the interaction that takes place over a four-year span between one individual and her or his neighbors, etc., then questions arise about interaction in general and the perpetuation of social dynamics. To begin, as much must be understood about the context of practice as possible. To achieve this, interpretation of context and material culture (in this case dietary evidence is used to replace artifacts) is treated as a textual reading. This form of interpretation places equal importance on the



context of the frontier and the context of the questions I ask of it. What follows is an analysis of the faunal evidence left by an individual and his small, frontier family. From this data I will present the context of practice, a place for the forms of action I propose.

## CHAPTER II

### ZOOARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA

#### *Introduction*

Not usually included under the term *material culture*, faunal remains should be perceived as equally, if not more, reliant signs of human action and meaning. Within an interpretative archaeological approach, faunal remains take on the role of symbolic signposts to the daily categories of identity, and identity signaling through interaction. Like artifacts, people's food remains represent social practices and the implementation of these practices into "meaningfully organized activity" (Hodder 1991:12).

#### *About the Site*

The geographic area of the Fort Chiswell site lies in present-day Wythe County, Virginia, west of the Blue Ridge, at the bottom of the Great Valley, at the foot of the Appalachians. Amid rolling hills with pasture, shallow clay soils, and denuded bedrock shale and sandstone, natural terraces provide level enough ground for settlement and establishment of structures, both domiciliary and non-habitational. Though the underlying regolith would pose a problem for the placement of wells, numerous springs provide fresh water sources. The site is located near a tributary of the New River, Reed Creek, in a tract of land known from the time of settlement as Buffalo Lick (Kegley 1938:116, 127).

According to documents, the first Anglo man to settle on this land, originally a parcel of a 100,000 acre tract in then Augusta County, for any semi-permanent stint of time, was Alexander Sayers (Kegley 1938:116). Sayers was most probably of Scots-Irish descent. He traveled down the Great Valley to southern Augusta County from Pennsylvania, as did most Scots-Irish settlers who came to the Reed Creek area (Heavener 1976:4; Waddell 1902). His tract consisted of 504 acres lying along Reed Creek, his second property in the area since he had a nearby piece of land surveyed for him in 1746, and he was mentioned for road maintenance in 1750 (Hazzard and McCartney 1976: 5; Kegley 1938:122). By 1756, Sayers was living on the Fort Chiswell land and had constructed a grist mill on Buffalo Lick, but during the following year he purchased and subsequently moved to New London (Hazzard and McCartney 1976: 6). This limits his occupation time on the Buffalo Lick property to less than a decade, or, as suggested by Hazzard and McCartney, from 1754 to 1758 (1976: 38). This date corresponds with the findings of the archaeological investigations performed during 1975 and 1976.

Some personal notes about Alexander Sayers: He traveled from Pennsylvania with his brother, William Sayers, and his father, Robert, to this part of the frontier (Kegley and Kegley 1980). In 1752 Alexander Sayers was made a captain in the local militia and spent a short time away from the Fort Chiswell vicinity during the Seven Years War (Kegley and Kegley 1980:47; Hazzard and McCartney 1976:7). He must have been well known in the community as he is mentioned frequently in court records, from such things as road work, once for being intoxicated at court, and another for blasphemy (Hazzard and McCartney 1976:6). His brother, William, is also mentioned in court records and he appears to have had more money than Alexander (Kegley and Kegley 1980:71), or at least he held on to his. Though his land

purchases were of approximate size and of the same tract of a nearby affluent landowner John Montgomery, Sayers had fallen into bad luck by 1764 when he was known to be insolvent; he died the following year when he drowned in the New River (Kegley and Kegley 1980:70). It is not known how he died--intoxicated, suicide--but he left no personal will and no probate was recorded. More will be said of Alexander Sayers' actions and their historical context in chapter four.

### *The Archaeology*

As noted in the 1976 interim report, the first year's work was carried out by the University of Virginia and was paid for by the Department of Highways and Transportation--the final excavations were carried out and funded by the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology (currently VDHR). The archaeology revealed subsurface vestiges of seven structures and four distinct, historic occupations: Sayers 1754-1758; Byrd 1760-1761; McGavock and descendants 1771-1901; and the Davis family 1910-1968 (Hazzard and McCartney 1976: 3).

For the purposes of this analysis only the first occupation (1754-1758) is being considered, as the majority of faunal remains are associated with the Sayers' habitation. This includes eight balk-excavation units covering a hearth and burn area within the interior of Sayers' house and another burn area feature associated with the 1750s component. It should be noted that only those details of excavation which are apposite to the context (recovery of faunal remains and component clarification) will be mentioned here--for complete details of excavation techniques, methodology and findings see the respective reports cited.

### *Previous Zooarchaeology of the Site*

A preliminary report on the first season's faunal assemblage was done by John F. Reuwer in 1975 [Chapter 7 in Funk's report]. Reuwer, because of time constraints and paucity of resources, curtailed his analysis to include only those units associated with the Sayers' occupation ["Structure 2"]; this was, however, the bulk of the faunal remains, consisting of 4947 bones, 998 of which were identified. Topics for further analysis such as taphonomy, aging, distribution, and butchering methods were not completed nor was a perusal of the unidentifiable fragments. These facts, plus this statement, "A greater investment of time, and more extensive comparative collection could have helped identify another 30 to 40 percent of the fragments" (93), compelled me to re-analyze the Fort Chiswell faunal assemblage first studied by Reuwer.

It should be stated that the intentions of this author (JLW-R) are not to prove anyone wrong, upset numbers, or attempt to perform a *better* analysis, but rather to offer something the first analysis did not have--more time and a replete comparative collection.

### *Origin of the Data*

The bones analyzed in this study are from one main site component, tightly dated to the first, or Sayers' (1754-1758), occupation of the site. Though combined for statistical reasons explained below, the elements originate from two disparate features associated with the Sayers' homestead. The first of the two is from within the bounds of the structure. This structure "consists of a ruined and partially dismantled chimney base, fire box, and an associated oblong concentration of heavy midden and related features" (Funk 1975:16). The second feature, referred to as Feature 8 in the report, is at the opposite end of the chimney base in what would have been the house/cabin.

The excavation methods included balk style units which were taken off in natural stratigraphic layers. All material was sorted by trowel and not sifted through hardware mesh. This last fact makes certain types of faunal interpretation impossible (viz. species diversity and in-depth dietary analysis) (Reitz 1978:31). The basis for strong quantitative statements is a thoroughly collected faunal assemblage; this is in keeping with basic lab procedures, sampling theory and the scientific method. Any shortcomings in sampling methodology knowingly skew data and do not conform to the tenets of a positivistic philosophy. Besides problems with sampling brought on by recovery methods, the faunal remains seem to have suffered little in regard to destructive taphonomic processes. Except for chewed bone and a small percentage of burned and slightly weathered elements (usually degraded as a result of burning) the bones are in good condition and are well preserved; no form of conservation was used. This type of faunal assemblage, therefore, while not best suited for the application of typical zooarchaeological quantitative methods (Brewer 1992), is ideal for qualitative statements about frontier subsistence and statements which attempt to explain the presence of the remains.

### ***Methodology***

The faunal remains are under the care of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia. The bones recovered in 1975 by the University of Virginia are stored with those recovered the following year by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (formally VRCA). Bones from both seasons were cleaned, labeled, analyzed and stored. In 1993 the Virginia Department of Historic Resources loaned all faunal remains from the site to me for comparative analysis and this research.

Once in the Colonial Williamsburg Faunal Lab, the first treatment of the bones was a sort based on whether or not the fragment was identifiable to the level of taxonomic *Order*. Identifiable and unidentifiable fragments were separated and the identifiable received a unique bone number. Bones thought to be identifiable were compared to Dr. Joanne Bowen's (Colonial Williamsburg, Department of Archaeology) replete faunal collection. Degree of fusion, relative size, age, sex, weight, conditions and modifications of the bone were all recorded during the identification process. Like the identifiable bone, the unidentifiable elements were assigned a unique bone number either in allotments or individually. This material was identified to taxon and then within broader elemental categories such as *long bone*, *flat bone*, *rib*, etc. Identification of rib elements was not attempted--these were classified to taxon and relative size (e.g. "medium mammal, rib, body"). Weights, as well as comments about modifications and condition, were also noted for the unidentifiables. All of the information was entered into a bone quantification application, specifically, a relational database within Microsoft's FoxPro™, designed by Colonial Williamsburg staff archaeologist, Gregory Brown.

### *Methods of Quantification*

Four standard quantification methods were applied to the Sayers' House faunal data. All have strengths and weaknesses but serve the purpose of reporting quantity and interpretive information about the remains. The methods include NISP, MNI, Estimated Meat Weight, and Biomass calculations. The two latter attempt to put meat on to the two former.

The method of NISP adhered to in this analysis refers to number of identified specimens/fragments per taxon (Grayson 1979,1984; Klein and Cruz-Uribe 1984; Payne 1975). The "bean counting" method is adequate for

the comparison of the frequency between species' elements. The counting of identifiable elements is the basis for important interpretive relationships between faunal classes, therefore points that undermine the NISP method must be addressed. Namely, bones undergo taphonomic processes that disturb the representation of elements. These "post-depositional processes" (Brewer 1992:210) include soil, or depositional conditions and their oftentimes deleterious affects on bone (e.g. acid soils) resulting in "differential preservation" (Grayson 1984:21). Likewise, relying on NISP requires the assumption that "all specimens are equally affected by chance or by deliberate breakage" (Grayson 1984:21). The butchery performed might create more fragments for an underrepresented species than for an animal with a higher individual frequency. As Brewer (1992) notes, the skull of catfish, which is highly diagnostic, would be identified more frequently than the fragmented cranium of a sheep (210). Although the frequency of catfish might exceed that of a sheep, the mammal would provide the catfish's meat quantity many times over. Last, recovery techniques determine the representation of the types of faunal remains. Biases of recovery including sifting techniques and sorting that do not provide a thorough representation of all of the species present (Shaffer 1992). This last condition affects all levels of quantification.

The MNI approach clears some of the noise concentrating around the NISP procedure. MNI is the minimum number of individuals per taxon (Grayson 1984), or "the smallest number of individuals of one species from which the most common skeletal element in an assemblage could have been derived" (Shipman 1981:201-202). The MNI accounts for specimen interdependence, the short-coming of the NISP method (Breitburg 1991; Grayson 1984:27). This calculation was accomplished by separating rights and lefts of



represented elements and counting the minimum number for each side based on comparative size. One of the inherent assumptions about MNI calculations is the equal distribution of specimens across the site (Brewer 1992:212). That is, when analyzing a few particular contexts, the number of MNIs has the potential of being higher than if one looked at the specimens from a whole site.

The MNI method allows a calculation of meat weight. Added to the minimum number of specimens is a derived amount of usable meat. This calculation, although criticized for slight inaccuracy in accounting for variations in animal size, is more realistic in its emphasis on dietary importance, assuming the remains were of food. Often the usable meat weight is based on an average for a particular taxon as taken from colonial records--the biases for this approach being, of course, meat weights vary greatly in domesticates, and the criteria that allow for what is meant by "usable meat" (Brewer 1985:218).

The last quantitative method employed in this study is based on the weight of animal bones, or "biomass." This method is measured by way of allometry, or the relative growth of a part of an organism in relation to the whole. As Reitz et al. (1987) point out, as "body weight increases there is also a differential increase in the proportion of the total body mass contributed by the skeleton" (305). By applying the data from allometric calculations an estimate of body weight is provided (Reitz et al. 1987). The problem with biomass estimates derived by Reitz et al. is how similar these estimates are in relation to animals of the past (Brewer 1992:220).

As well as the four quantitative methods discussed above, other aspects of the faunal assemblage were investigated to shed light on the ways in which

the animals were butchered, their ages at the time of death, and exposure to carnivores and other detrimental factors.

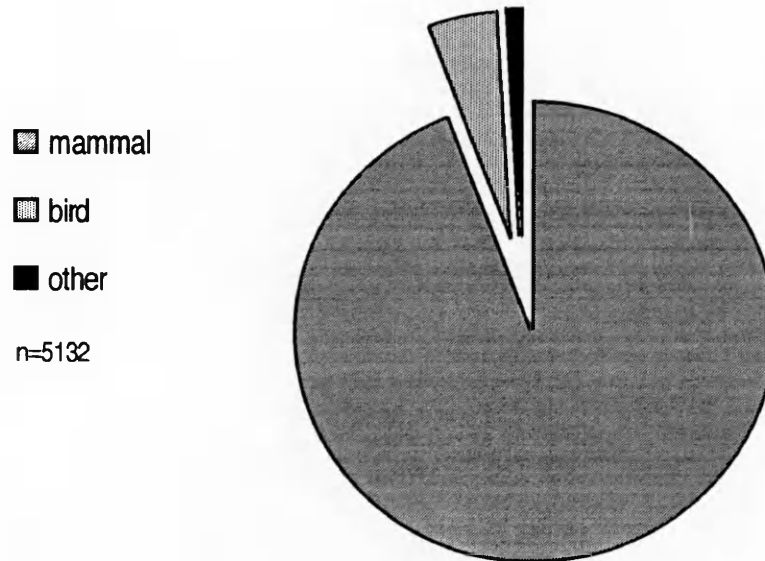
In consideration of biases and strengths of quantitative methods, a few words should be said about conditions of the depositional environment as they relate to taphonomy. Taphonomy, generally, attempts to study the natural processes that transform material deposited in/on the earth back into earth (Gifford 1981; Lyman 1987). Conditions such as relative humidity, temperature, chemical inclusions, and pH all affect the state of archaeological faunal remains in the soil. Taphonomy has shown that both helpful and harmful conditions exist (Gifford 1981). For example, bone does not last long in soil with a low, acidic pH. The presence or absence of faunal elements may indicate taphonomic conditions for a site. Except for evidence of carnivore chewing on numerous bones, the Sayers' assemblage seems to have had little in the way of detrimental taphonomic processes. Small, fragile bones such as turkey and goose digits were recovered as well as cancellous rib fragments of large, medium, and small mammals.

## **The Data**

### ***Species Represented***

A total of 5,132 bones were analyzed for this study. Of this amount, 1,183, or 23% of the assemblage, were identifiable. The complete faunal assemblage would no doubt have been more diverse if different recovery methods were practiced. It must be noted, however, that, according to some, as many biases exist for screened soil as for trowel-sorted, or hand-sorted soils (Shaffer 1992). Still, several small, highly fragile elements were recovered from the same units as numerous large mammal bones. Most of these small bones are avian. The overall breakdown by class is shown in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1



#### Classes Represented from Total Assemblage

As can be seen here, based on NISP data and unidentifiabiles, mammal bones are overwhelmingly the most numerous. Of the mammals, more species level identifications were made than any other Class; ten specific species are represented (see *Table 1*).

While not extraordinarily diverse, this sample indicates the mixture of wild and domestic species encountered on various seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century, frontier sites (Barber 1983; Faulkner and Faulkner 1987; Jordan and Kaups 1989; McBride and McBride 1993; Miller 1984; O'Brien 1984; Warren 1981). This sample is representative of animal species brought to the frontier and/or encountered there, but relative dietary importance for these representative species varies greatly. Relative dietary importance will be discussed later, but it should be noted at this point that the largest

proportion of the species identified are typical mammal food sources ranging from large to medium-sized mammals. Other species represented (i.e. fish, reptiles, and birds) seem to have been encountered and harvested, but contributed little to the overall diet.

### *Fish and Reptiles*

Fish and reptiles are the smallest components of the faunal remains comprising only 0.09% of the NISP totals and 5.08% of the MNIs. The fish are identified as belonging to the bony fish class, two identified as belonging to the catfish family. Two reptiles are represented in the assemblage and are identified as a box turtle and a snapping turtle. The box turtle is a known food source for Native Americans and European settlers, but it may have died on the site naturally; the snapping turtle was out of aquatic habitat and has evidence of having been butchered.

### *Birds*

Half of the 243 bones classified as being avian were unidentifiable. Of the identifiable birds present on the site, the majority are presumably wild species. Considering this was a recent frontier settlement, it is not likely that the geese, ducks, or turkeys were domesticates (Jordan and Kaups 1989). These three make-up 94% of the avian NISP totals and with the individual identified to the class Phasianidae (grouse, partridge, or pheasant) added, they comprise 73% of the avian MNIs. The following birds were identified: duck (*Duck* spp), goose (*Goose* spp.), turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), chicken (*Gallus gallus*), and bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*).

**Table 1**Fish

Class Osteichthytes (Bony Fish)

Family Ictaluridae (Catfish)

Reptiles*Chelydra serpentina* (Snapping Turtle)*Terrapene carolina* (Eastern Box Turtle)Birds

Family Anatidae (Swan, Goose, or Duck)

*Duck* spp. (Duck)*Goose* spp. (Goose)

Order Falconiformes (Vulture, Hawk, or Falcon)

Order Galliformes (Fowl-like Bird)

Family Phasianidae (Quail, Pheasants, and Partridges)

*Meleagris gallopavo* (Turkey)*Gallus gallus* (Chicken)*Colinus virginianus* (Bobwhite Quail)Mammals*Marmota monax* (Woodchuck)*Castor canadensis* (Beaver)*Canis* Spp. (Dog or Wolf)*Ursus americanus* (Black Bear)*Procyon lotor* (Raccoon)

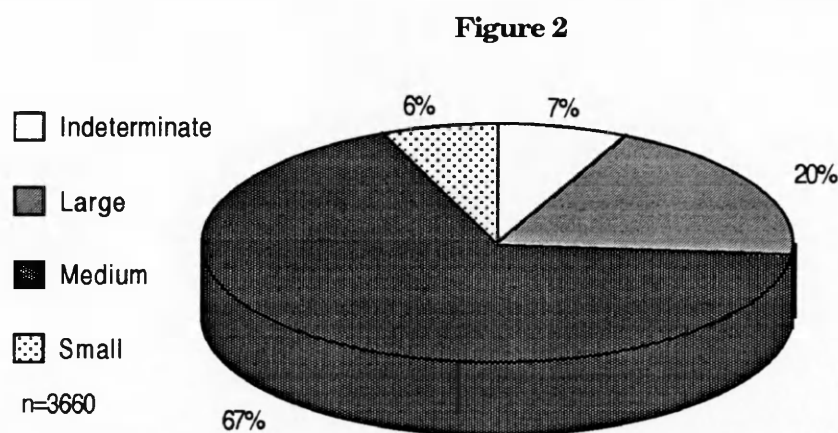
Order Artiodactyla I (Sheep, Goat, Deer, or Pig)

Order Artiodactyla II (Sheep, Goat, or Deer)

*Sus scrofa* (Pig)*Odocoileus virginianus* (White-tailed Deer)*Bos taurus* (Cow)*Ovis aries* (Sheep)*Ovis aries/Capra hircus* (Sheep/Goat)**Identified Taxa from Faunal Assemblage**

## Mammals

As mentioned above, mammals make-up the largest percentage of the faunal assemblage. The 4,839 mammal bones are 94% of the entire collection. Most of the mammal bone was unidentifiable (77%) and within this group the analytical breakdown of size is important: 6% small-sized mammal, 7% mammal (size indeterminate), 20% large-sized mammal (most-likely *Bos taurus*), and 67% medium-sized mammal (see *Figure 2*).



### Unidentifiable Mammals by Size

The differences in size represented in the assemblage are important in regard to those species that are identifiable. When a large percentage of medium mammals is identified to a specific species (e.g. sheep) then it may be likely that a high percentage of the unidentifiables of the same size range are sheep bones. This assumption must take into account differential treatment of elements before and after deposition.

Identifiable mammals include the following wild species: raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), woodchuck (*Marmota monax*), beaver (*Castor canadensis*), black bear (*Ursus americanus*), white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and what could have been a wolf, or dog (*Canis* spp.). Also present are familiar

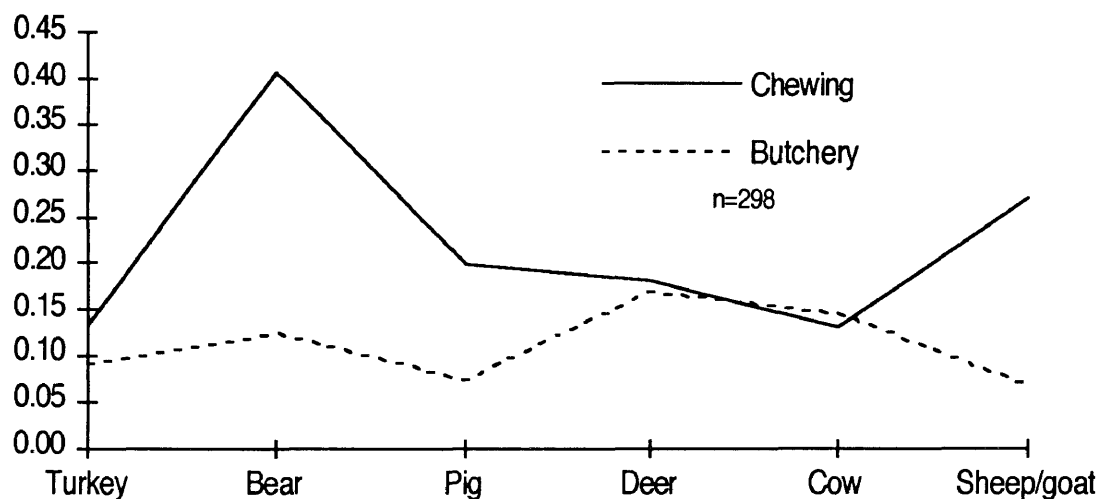
domesticates: pig (*Sus scrofa*), cow (*Bos taurus*), sheep (*Ovis aries*) and the problematic sheep/goat (*Ovis aries* / *Capra hircus*).

### *Modifications*

Elements in each class have undergone some form of modification. The evidence varies but most, if not all, of the modifications are a result of human influence. For the combined assemblage of NISPs 13.3% are carnivore chewed, and 0.8% are burned--butchery marks were noted and counted but no in-depth analysis was undertaken.

Some species evinced more carnivore chewing than others; for example, 40% of all elements identified as bear were carnivore chewed compared to 15% of the total pig bones. This difference could be related to the ways in which the elements were obtained. *Figure 3* shows the frequency of butchering and chewing (combined “chewed” and “carnivore chewed”) on the dominant food providing animals. Another example of modification from the assemblage includes a long bone fragment of a large mammal that was a nearly completed handle for a knife.

Figure 3



Carnivore Chewing and Butchery Modifications

### ***Dietary Importance***

The following table and subsequent discussion covers the entire faunal assemblage. However, in consideration of the goals of this section, only those animals that are seen as being substantial meat providers will be discussed. When NISP, MNI, meat weight and Biomass figures are seen together, a picture of species abundance and relative dietary importance becomes apparent (see summary data in *Table 2*). In consideration of sheer quantity, Class Mammalia overwhelmingly provided more food sources than the other classes of animals. When lumped, unidentified bones are the greatest in number comprising over 65% of the entire component, 71% of which are medium-sized mammal. Likewise, biomass percentages indicate that most of the bone from the site, and 35% of this entire component, are mammal.



<u>Taxon</u>	NISP		MNI		Meat Weight		Biomass		
	No.	Pct.	Adult	Immature	Total	Pct.	Lbs.	Pct.	(kg)
Class Osteichthyces (Bony Fish)	1	0.0%						0.014	0.0%
Family Ictaluridae (Cattfish)	2	0.0%	1		1	1.7%	2.0	0.081	0.0%
Chelydra serpentina (Snapping Turtle)	1	0.0%	1		1	1.7%	10.0	0.049	0.0%
Terrapene carolina (Eastern Box Turtle)	1	0.0%	1		1	1.7%	0.3	0.045	0.0%
Class Aves (Bird)	120	2.3%						1.540	0.4%
cf. Class Aves (Bird)	1	0.0%						0.069	0.0%
Class Aves/Mammalia III (Bird/Small mammal)	42	0.8%						0.414	0.1%
cf. Class Aves/Mammalia III (Bird/Small mammal)	3	0.1%						0.055	0.0%
cf. Family Anatidae (Swan, Goose, or Duck)	1	0.0%						0.024	0.0%
Duck spp. (Duck)	2	0.0%	2		2	3.4%	4.0	0.026	0.0%
cf. Duck spp. (Duck)	1	0.0%						0.007	0.0%
Goose spp. (Goose)	5	0.1%	2		2	3.4%	14.0	0.125	0.0%
cf. Goose spp. (Goose)	3	0.1%						0.117	0.0%
cf. Order Falconiformes (Vulture, Hawk, or Falcon)	4	0.1%						0.052	0.0%
Order Galliformes (Fowl-like Bird)	2	0.0%						0.035	0.0%
Family Phasianidae (Grouse, Partridge, or Pheasant)	1	0.0%						0.011	0.0%
Meleagris gallopavo (Turkey)	92	1.8%	6		6	10.2%	45.0	4.001	1.1%
cf. Meleagris gallopavo (Turkey)	6	0.1%						0.162	0.0%
Gallus gallus (Chicken)	4	0.1%	2		2	3.4%	5.0	0.107	0.0%
cf. Colinus virginianus (Bobwhite Quail)	1	0.0%	1		1	1.7%	0.5	0.013	0.0%
Class Mammalia (Mammal)	267	5.2%						4.865	1.3%
cf. Class Mammalia (Mammal)	2	0.0%						0.126	0.0%
Class Mammalia I (Large Mammal)	722	14.1%						61.436	16.1%
Class Mammalia II (Medium Mammal)	2439	47.5%						75.852	19.9%
cf. Class Mammalia II (Medium Mammal)	1	0.0%						0.159	0.0%
Class Mammalia III (Small Mammal)	232	4.5%						3.019	0.8%
cf. Class Mammalia III (Small Mammal)	4	0.1%						0.019	0.0%

Table 2--Summary Data

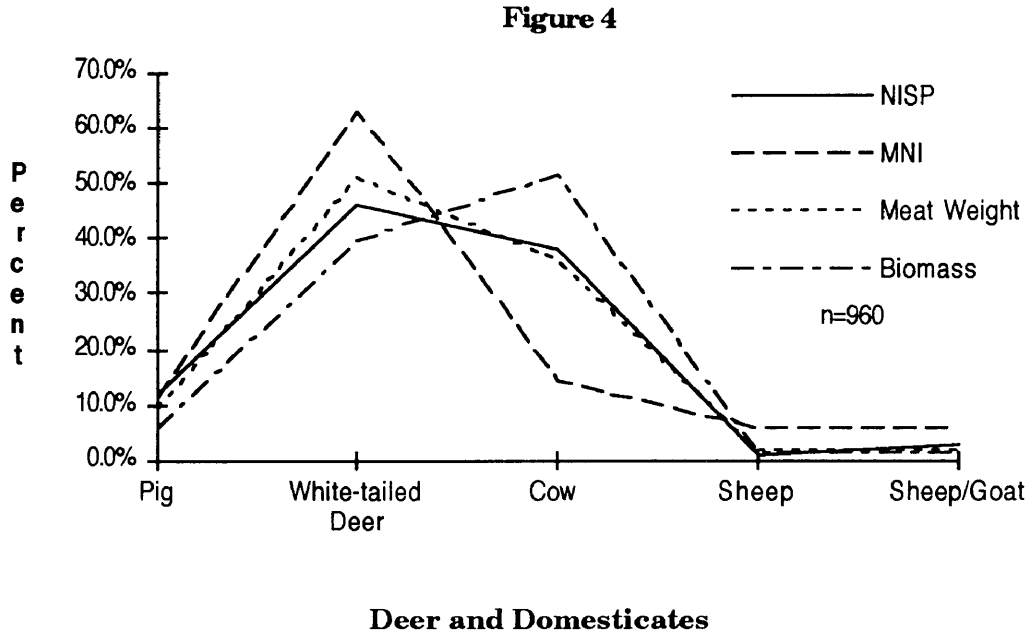
<u>Taxon</u>	NISP		MNI		Meat Weight		Biomass			
	No.	Pct.	Adult	Immature	Total	Pct.	Lbs.	Pct.	(kg)	Pct.
Class Mammalia III (Small Mammal)	232	4.5%							3,019	0.8%
cf. Class Mammalia III (Small Mammal)	4	0.1%							0.019	0.0%
cf. Marmota monax (Woodchuck)	1	0.0%	1		1	1.7%	5.0	0.1%	0.053	0.0%
Castor canadensis (Beaver)	2	0.0%	1		1	1.7%	25.0	0.5%	0.100	0.0%
cf. Castor canadensis (Beaver)	1	0.0%							0.114	0.0%
Canis Spp. (Dog or Wolf)	2	0.0%	1		1	1.7%			0.132	0.0%
cf. Canis Spp. (Dog or Wolf)	1	0.0%							0.098	0.0%
Ursus americanus (Black Bear)	20	0.4%	3	1	4	6.8%	680.0	14.7%	4,709	1.2%
cf. Ursus americanus (Black Bear)	12	0.2%							1,416	0.4%
Procyon lotor (Raccoon)	1	0.0%	1		1	1.7%	15.0	0.3%	0.066	0.0%
Order Artiodactyla (Even-toed Ungulate)	1	0.0%							0.047	0.0%
Order Artiodactyla I (Sheep, Goat, Deer, or Pig)	67	1.3%							5,349	1.4%
cf. Order Artiodactyla I (Sheep, Goat, Deer, or Pig)	1	0.0%							0.060	0.0%
Order Artiodactyla II (Sheep, Goat, or Deer)	47	0.9%							4,791	1.3%
Sus scrofa (Domestic Pig)	113	2.2%	3	1	4	6.8%	350.0	7.6%	11,902	3.1%
cf. Sus scrofa (Domestic Pig)	9	0.2%							0.869	0.2%
Odocoileus virginianus (White-Tailed Deer)	441	8.6%	19	3	22	37.3%	1950.0	42.2%	80,941	21.3%
cf. Odocoileus virginianus (White-Tailed Deer)	13	0.3%							2,245	0.6%
Bos taurus (Domestic Cow)	367	7.2%	4	1	5	8.5%	1380.0	29.8%	105,450	27.7%
cf. Bos taurus (Domestic Cow)	31	0.6%							4,230	1.1%
Ovis aries (Domestic Sheep)	9	0.2%	2		2	3.4%	70.0	1.5%	2,947	0.8%
Ovis aries/Capra hircus (Domestic Sheep or Goat)	30	0.6%	2		2	3.4%	70.0	1.5%	2,528	0.7%
cf. Ovis aries/Capra hircus (Domestic Sheep or Goat)	1	0.0%							0.075	0.0%
cf. Order Perissodactyla/Artiodactyla (Ungulate)	1	0.0%							0.128	0.0%
cf. Bos taurus/Equus Spp. (Domestic Cow, Horse, or Ass)	1	0.0%							0.122	0.0%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5132</b>	<b>100.0%</b>			<b>59</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>4625.8</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>380,795</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 2--Summary Data

*Deer*

White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) contributed to the Sayers' diet significantly. Within the entire assemblage a minimum number of 22 deer were identified. This number was derived mostly from meat bearing long bones, mandibles, and taphonomically durable foot bones (i.e. calcanea and astragali). The element distribution associated with the deer remains suggests that entire animals were butchered on site. It also shows that mandibles are fractured, usually a result of hacking at the ascending ramus, in such a way as to suggest extraction of the tongue for food (Ewen 1986:21). If more long-bones and innominates were not so badly fragmented, a higher MNI valued would have been determined as well as parity between durable foot bones and longer, more fragile elements.

The number of identified deer specimens is 8.6% of the entire faunal assemblage. The fragments of deer bone are the most numerous on the site. The same holds for MNI values as well. Surprisingly, the number of deer bone fragments, individuals, and meat weight is greater than the same representations for cow bone elements. For this assemblage deer bone fragments make-up more NISP and MNI values than all of the domesticates combined and almost as much as Meat Weight combined, only falling short by a few pounds. Since deer rarely rivals domestic contributors, a graph better expresses this relationship (See *Figure 4*).

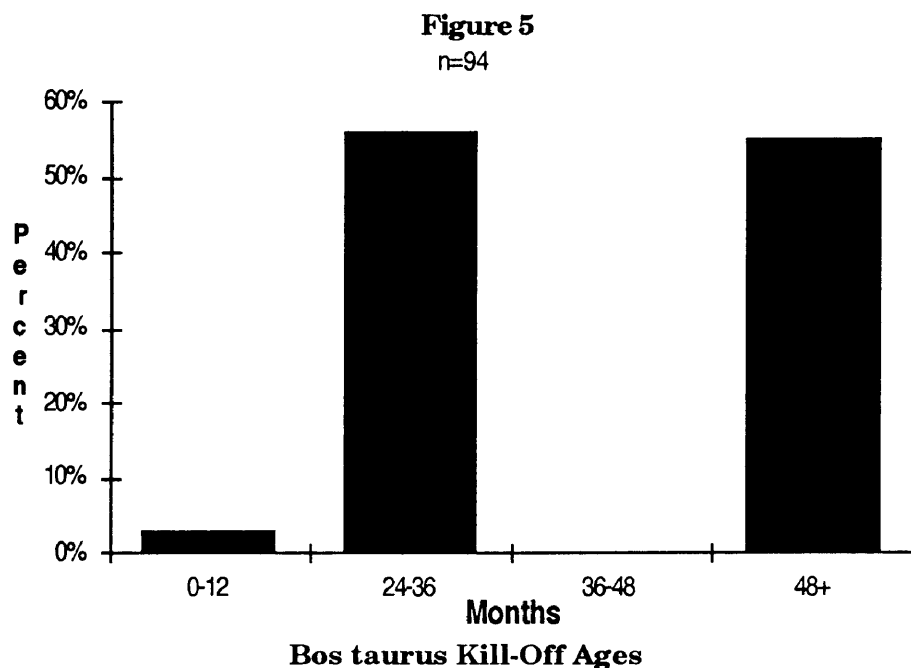


### *Cattle*

Cattle (*Bos taurus*) are represented by 367 identified fragments and five individuals, making-up 7.2% and 8.3% of the Structure 2 bones, respectively. The estimated meat-weight for the five individuals, one of which is immature, is 1,380 pounds, or 29.8% of the usable meat. Age estimates based on data from Chaplin (1971) and Silver (1969) indicate “kill-off” of cattle occurred when the animals were approximately two to three years old, or over four years old (see *Figure 5*).

Bowen (1991) indicates that cattle were most often slaughtered after a culturally prescribed “optimum weight” was reached or when draft and dairy functions became inutile (2). The ages are calculated from 94 long bone fragments and the relationship that exists between fused and unfused epiphyses of these long bones--these relative ages are estimates based on modern cattle (Bowen 1994). Modern cattle must be used for such estimates as the database of cattle ancestors is being developed from archaeological information. However, a caveat must be entered here since modern age data

varies greatly. This is due to species diversity, husbandry, diet, environmental conditions and the relationships that exist between these factors. What researchers are attempting to understand currently is the aging process in domestic cattle (Bowen 1994; 1995).



Recent research has sought differing livestock “kill-off patterns” between regions (Bowen 1994). The kill-off percentages of this assemblage may suggest compromising aspects of frontier animal husbandry in their relationship to prior practices from the Chesapeake. Research in this frontier region has shown that cattle herd raising for profit flourished from the early settlement well into the nineteenth century (Beeman 1978; MacMaster 1991; Mitchell 1972; Silver 1990; Sorrells 1991; Tillson 1991). At the same time, the uplands climate would appear more suitable for dairy-based activities. In Miller’s data, the kill-off ages of those practicing a more “focused economy” resemble the data above in their preservation of older individuals for draft and dairy while younger individuals were slaughtered at the time of their optimum preference value (Miller 1978; 168; 1984:315,322). This “system” is what researchers refer to as the Chesapeake Herding System (Bowen 1994;

Miller 1984). In this herding practice, the raising of cattle as a meat source was still ancillary to the production of the cash crop tobacco. Cattle roamed freely on lands drained by tobacco production as well as woodlands, and accordingly were harvested when it was deemed appropriate (Bowen 1994:160-161). The conditions under which cattle were raised posed a uniquely North American situation. The system is one that changed and developed over time, but at once had to adjust to the abundance of fodder for livestock and less intensive husbandry (Bowen 1995). The ages when the Sayers' cattle were killed share ranges of the Chesapeake, but still vary slightly from the Chesapeake method (Bowen 1994; Miller 1978)--enough to suggest an alternative interpretation.

In the Sayers assemblage the cattle had reached their culturally desirable meat weight or old age when they were slaughtered. The high percentage of older individuals along with the more numerous two to three year olds may suggest two things: (1) the reason for older cattle might be explained by the successful production of offspring, and (2) the high percentage of two to three year olds might suggest early maturation of individuals due to a change of habitat brought on by their adaptation to this region. Cattle in frontier regions roamed freely, and (from a perspective that accepts neotony as a viable explanatory tool) this loosening of otherwise overpopulated habitat would bring on youthful, growth characteristics (Bowen 1995; Budiansky 1992). In support of this argument, what is not present in the data is the heavily weighted three to four year olds; this absence can best be explained in the context of highland, frontier herd raising and droving.

### *Bear*

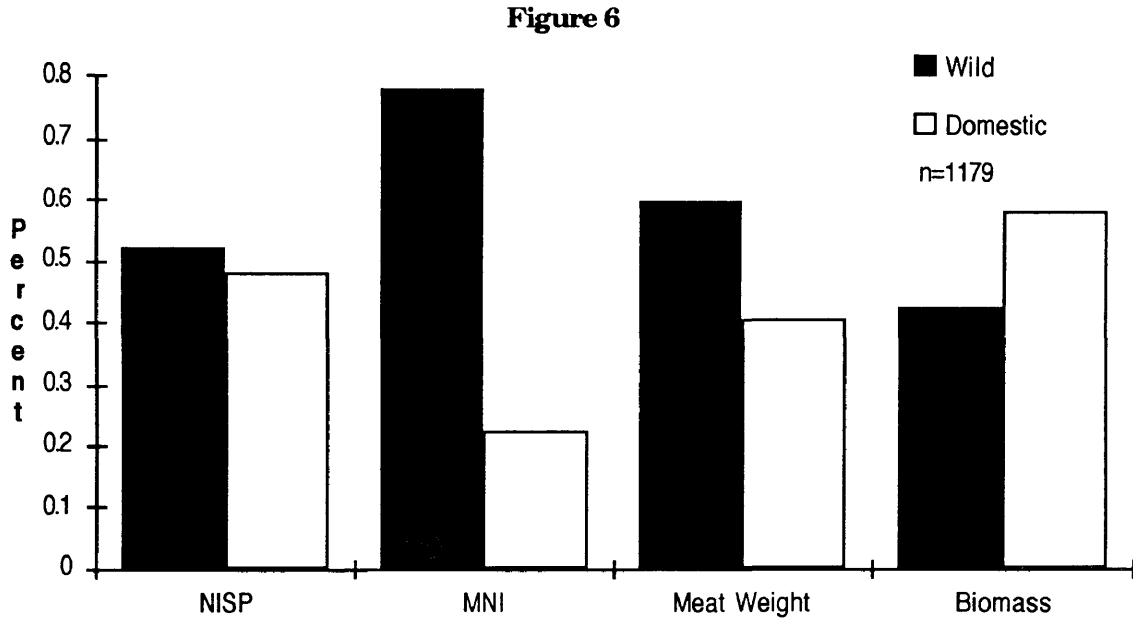
Black bear (*Ursus americanus*) has a moderate representation in the NISP, MNI, and biomass measurements, but a considerably higher amount in meat weight (14.7%). Here, the percentage of contribution to meat weight is higher than that of pig, sheep, and sheep/goat combined.

### *Swine*

Next to cattle, pig (*Sus scrofa*) is the next largest domestic meat contributor. Four individuals consisting of about 350 pounds of meat (7.6% of usable meat) are represented. Not enough long bone fragments are present to calculate age data, but element distribution points to on-site slaughter and butchery.

### *Sheep and Sheep/Goat*

Sheep (*Ovis aries*) and Sheep/Goat (*Ovis aries* / *Capra hircus*) form a small percentage of the Sayers faunal assemblage. A total of 39 fragments are identified to the level of sheep and sheep/goat. Sheep was distinguished from goat (*Capra hircus*) and sheep/goat by way of subtle, morphological differences. The works of specialists (Boessneck, et al. 1964; Prummel and Frisch 1987; Melinda Zeder (n.d.)) on the subject are compiled by Jerry Dandoy (1993), zooarchaeologist, and are used by this author to distinguish between the two species. The animals' combined meat weights are 140 pounds or 3.4% of the usable meat. The absence of foot bones, phalanges, and cranial parts suggests the sheep and sheep/goats were most likely slaughtered elsewhere.

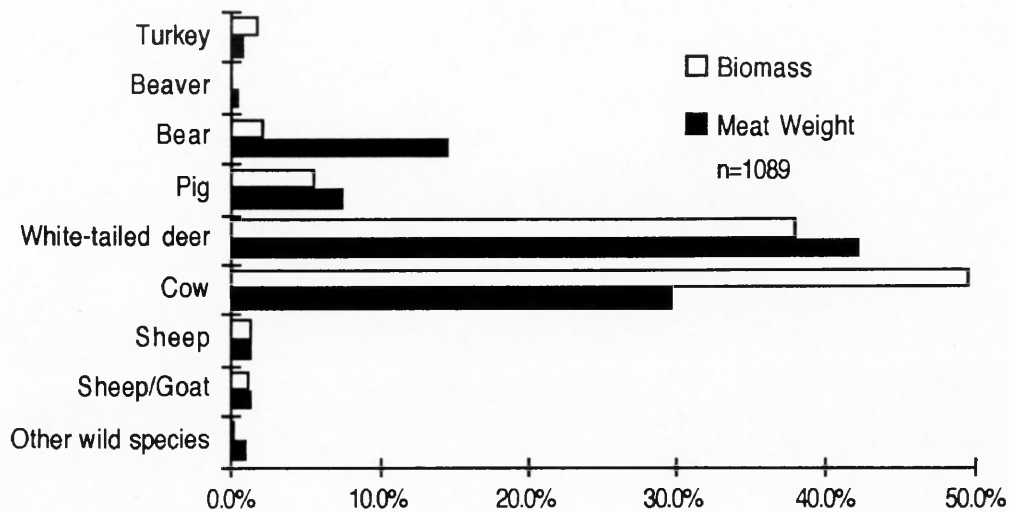


### *Other Wild Species*

The relative dietary importance of other wild species varies in the bones associated with Structure 2, as it does with domesticates (see *Figures 6 and 7*). Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) is represented relatively highly in biomass weights (1.1%) and MNI (six individuals, or 10.0%), but contributes little to overall meat weights (0.1%). This holds for ducks and geese where two individuals each represent 3.4% of MNIs and low percentages in NISP, Meat Weight, and Biomass measurements. While other wild species are present in the assemblage (e.g. fish, other birds, beaver, woodchuck and raccoon), their overall contribution to diet is nominal. Total meat weight for other wild mammals, wild birds and fish is under 100 pounds.



Figure 7



#### Meat Weight and Biomass Contributions

The extremely high numbers of white-tailed deer make this part of the Sayers' faunal assemblage interesting. It is quite common for highland frontier and backwoods sites to have percentages of deer bone forming as much as 20% of the identifiable faunal assemblage, but rarely does it compete with or surpass pork and beef (Groover 1994; McBride and McBride 1993; Miller 1984; Warren 1980).

#### Summary

Typically, though wild game made for a more diverse diet in the early years of the frontier, domesticates still provided more meat. This is a commonly held view and one that Henry Miller (1984) espouses in his analysis of the Chesapeake Frontier. Even in the sites covered by Miller, those of the seventeenth century Chesapeake/Tidewater frontier, domesticates were relied on more than wild species (1984:309). What Miller concludes is that colonists developed an adaptive strategy for coping with the harsh environment of the Chesapeake frontier and in so doing changed over time

from a subsistence strategy that was diffuse to one more focused (1984:309). This was based primarily on herd development over time and providing more abundant sources of meat. This explanation is adequate for paradigms which do not place the individual or individual practice at the center of activity. Such views of people on the frontier and elsewhere rather place individuals as the string puppets of a larger movements or forces. A further explanation is sought for the plenitude of wild species (viz. deer). Deer presumably would have been an ideal food source while Sayers built his cattle herd; this is the case for seventeenth century sites (Miller 1984). Still, the seventeenth century, which saw large herds of cattle raised this way, had a larger food contribution by domesticates.

It is noted that hunting and the harvesting of game usually contributed to the diet in some way, but rarely do wild species offer as much to the historic diet as they do in this faunal assemblage (Barber 1981; Miller 1984). What remains of interest is the overall distribution of wild and domesticated animals and their relationship to each other. The proportion of wild mammals in this combined assemblage is remarkable. The question then becomes why?

This section might lead one to conclude that once again evidence supports the belief that people move to the frontier, have a hard time subsisting, seek alternatives to their traditional diet, add wild species to the diet until stability arises and then focal subsistence perpetuates cultural stability. This paper suggests, however, that functional stability is not maintained, reached nor ever possible. Individuals always strive to practice. This practice may include the absence of action, interaction or "purpose", or it may include conflict and compromise between, and manipulation of, symbols that differentiate individuals socially.

## CHAPTER III

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

#### *The Frontier Milieu*

The western and southwestern part of what is now Virginia was once a large frontier county that included the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Great Valley, the Piedmont and the Appalachians. With its mountains, rolling hills, and vast bottom land, this region was quite different from the East. Game flourished here and some of the first exploits capitalized from this abundance. People swelled into the region over the course of the eighteenth century and made for themselves a distinct way of life, combining elements of their previous homes, trials of emigration, contact with Natives Americans, and the discombobulated state of uprooting oneself and leaving one's place.

#### *Settlement of the Region*

During the 1730s the northern parts of the Great Valley were settled by people traveling south. This was the beginning of a large migration into land which had until this point been used by contact period Natives primarily for hunting and transportation routes. The forests and open woodlands abounded with game and many settlement routes followed well worn game trails. Pioneers encountered large mammal species such as elk and buffalo as well as countless white-tailed deer, black bears and wild turkeys. In the upper valley few of the aboriginal inhabitants remained (Tillson 1991). Tales of opportunity, inexpensive, fertile land, and abundance of resources got back

to the people living in the more densely settled areas of the North and East. People of diverse backgrounds emigrated toward the same lands and pushed the frontier farther south and west.

It is widely accepted that the eighteenth century frontier was made up of far more ethnically diverse people than the frontier of the seventeenth century (MacMaster 1991; Mitchell 1991; Mitchell and Newton 1988; Otto 1989). Immigrants and, to a lesser degree, land speculators comprised the thrust of movement to frontier lands. Departing from southeastern Pennsylvania and the lower Delaware and Hudson Valley (Mitchell 1991), Germans, Scots-Irish and English were the three large groups who settled the Great Valley frontier. Beeman cites a quotation from William Byrd, who in the 1740s noted the alacrity of the Scots-Irish settlers who were coming down the Great Valley “ ‘like the Goths and Vandals of old’ ” (1978:456). Some population percentages compiled by Mitchell and Newton (1988) show that between 1730-1775, in the Shenandoah Valley, 65-70% of the inhabitants were German and Scots-Irish, as compared to 50% in southwest New York; 65% in Maryland; and 65-70% in central and western Pennsylvania (27). The migrants to this American “second frontier” (Mitchell and Newton 1988:30) who hailed from Pennsylvania were different from seventeenth century migrants and new immigrants from western Europe; they were American born, had already lived one to two generations in the colonies, and had ties to the East (Mitchell 1972). When people did migrate, it was usually thought of as a permanent move, reassured by the sheer number of immigrants and locals departing for the frontier. Though often portrayed as a continuous flow of migrants, Jakle notes that migration occurred in spurts and was not steady (1977). This type of migration is what pre-historians refer to as “leap-frogging” (Anthony 1990:902), and it

accelerated settlement down the valley from Pennsylvania to North Carolina. To put the size of this migration into perspective, 75% of all pre-1790 immigrants settled between western New York and Tennessee (Keller 1991).

Of the then recent immigrants to North America, the Germans and Scots-Irish settled the Great Valley in the largest numbers during the years 1730-1750. During settlement, the tendency for these two groups was for the Germans to cluster while the Scots-Irish placed more space between themselves (Heavener 1976:6). Supposedly the first group of settlers into the valley was German, in 1726 (Heavener 1976:6). It is not important which group was first especially since any primacy of settlement must go to the American Indians, but it must be stressed that this eighteenth century frontier was ethnically diverse. The Germans, one third of whom came from the Rhineland (Mitchell 1991:12), were more apt to accept already established "local law[s] and custom[s]" while maintaining their heritage (Mitchell 1991:14). This is in contrast to the Scots-Irish who by speaking recognizable English blended in more with the diverse Britons. However, the Scots-Irish, known then as "Ulstermen," or "Presbyterians" (Keller 1991:70), sought isolation, or tolerance, after being discriminated against in Ireland for their religious beliefs (Otto 1989). Though taken from the late eighteenth century, recent surname studies show that the overall population of Scots-Irish in 1790 was 10.5% of the U.S. population and 11.7% in Virginia (Keller 1991:73). Other estimates not based on surnames are higher. Originally encouraged to settle the Pennsylvania frontier because of their deftness in Indian fighting, the Scots-Irish were eventually forced from this area by high quitrents (Keller 1991:74).

### *Farming, Husbandry, and Hunting*

The British tradition brought to the colonies in the seventeenth century was based in either the keeping of animals (viz. cattle, sheep, and swine) or grain agriculture (viz. wheat, barley, or oats); commonly the methods were mixed (Miller 1984:62-64). Colonists found that established ways of sustaining themselves in Britain did not work as well in the New World. Henry Miller (1984) gives seventeenth-to-eighteenth century subsistence change great detail in his dissertation on the Chesapeake frontier. Miller shows general trends in subsistence change that occurred as a result of cultural “adaptation” to a new environment, or, more appropriately, the adaptation of an individual’s agricultural competency to different ways of knowing.

Miller first explains the transplantation of yeoman foodways over the ocean. The British system of rigid field/crop rotation, fixed seasonality, and communal land usage is contrasted with the abrupt changes that were necessary for tobacco production (63). Sheep gave way in importance to free-range cattle (229,232), and the strong emphasis on mixed grains collided with the magic triad--corn, beans, and squash (62). The salient point of Miller’s work is his explanation of a major shift in people’s diets. He points out how a “diffuse type of adaptive strategy” (people ate different things than they did at home) became more “focal” as the regional settlement solidified toward the end of the seventeenth century (Miller 1984:375).

This new working conclusion has important implications. A people’s willingness to change their diet says something about meanings associated with food criteria and their cultural categories. Moreover, this willingness illustrates the degree to which a group of individuals decides to change criteria (Douglas 1966; Douglas and Isherwood 1979). A similar diffuse diet

was experienced by eighteenth century frontier settlers as well (Barber 1983; McBride and McBride 1993; Warren 1981). Looking at a diffuse diet as something more than what people had to do, it represents a mutual and knowledgeable acceptance of new categories of food. This could be the result of context, or the role individuals played within the context. When left to pattern seekers, this complex shift in meaning is merely an “adaptive strategy.”

Land was settled for many uses, ranging from home subsistence to intensive surplus agriculture. In his research on historic settlement of the Shenandoah Valley, Mitchell finds six factors that influenced agricultural settlement: the fertility of the soil; access to water; density of trees and brush; nearest neighbors; and roads [or potential for roads] to distribution centers (1972:471). If the chosen pursuit was agriculture, the first order of business for frontier farmers was to clear enough land to allow adequate sunlight to crops. Tillson points out that subsistence agriculture farms usually had 10% of their land cleared for crops (1991:9). The wood from cleared land was used for barns, houses and fences, or it was burned on the ground (Jakle 1977). Like the slash and burn practiced in the early days of colonial settlement, frontier farmers planted wheat and corn around recently felled tree-stumps. Crops planted by farmers included primarily corn, wheat, and rye (Mitchell 1972:476); a crop such as wheat was planted because of its relatively low labor intensity (Otto 1989). If land was silty bottom land, it did not need fertilization as frequently as high and rocky soil. Farmers manured fields or let them to pasture when the soil required replenishment (Otto 1989). Mitchell notes that in the Valley, agricultural surpluses were not reached until about ten years (1750s-1760s in the Shenandoah Valley) after settlement (1972:476).

The farmers and settlers who moved to the highland parts of the frontier (the Blue Ridge, and Appalachians) relied more on animal husbandry than crop raising. This could be related to the forest clearing that perforce preceded intensive planting and the advantageous nature of free-range cattle and pigs (Crosby 1986). It goes without saying that the highland ecotone poses more challenges to the farmer of the uplands when compared to those who work the lowland and/or bottom, arable land. For reasons discussed shortly, cattle and pigs historically have been seen as the largest meat contributors to frontier diet (Crosby 1986; Jordan and Kaups 1989; Kegley and Kegley 1980; Klose 1964; Laing 1954; MacMaster 1991; Mitchell 1972, 1991; Otto 1989; Silver 1990), while sheep had a lesser role (Kegley and Kegley 1980; Keller 1991).

### *Cattle and Swine*

As part of a mixed subsistence practice, cattle raising (for meat as well as draft and dairy resources) suited the frontier regions well. Especially since most cattle owners allowed their marked herds to roam free in the forests (Crosby 1986). This method of cattle rearing began in the colonies during the seventeenth century and merely required some sort of winter fodder for the animals (Otto 1989); building a shelter (or cow pen) was optional as was an annual spring burning of the forest floor to replenish vegetative undergrowth (Otto 1989:15). When traveling in the frontier regions of Virginia, William Byrd made note of the land where feral cattle herds roamed (Laing 1959:83). If not by property perimeter fences, cattle were kept around by salt licks, feeding, and/or calves (Crosby 1986:178), or they were hunted and shot (Manning-Sterling 1994:49). Later, when populations reached high levels, cattle were cheaply transported to market on foot, oftentimes by occupational



drovers (MacMaster 1991; Silver 1990; Tillson 1991). Some cattle drives went as far as North Carolina to Pennsylvania (Mitchell 1972:470).

If cattle were ideal for frontier situations then, in the opinion of some, pigs were beyond ideal (Jordan and Kaups 1989). Like seventeenth century swine, woodland settlers also permitted hogs to run wild (Crosby 1986; Miller 1984; Otto 1989; Silver 1990); omnivorous pigs foraged year round for edibles in the woods. The time spent feral changed the pigs morphologically, giving them features such as longer legs, tusks, and snout and a higher, ramp-shaped forehead (Crosby 1986; Noël Hume 1978). Pigs reproduce quickly and can deliver up to ten piglets to a litter (Crosby 1986; Jordan and Kaups 1989). As it occurred earlier in the East, this caused some confusion as to who owned feral pigs and many land owners lost track of the number of hogs they possessed--like feral cattle, to harvest a pig it had to be hunted (Jordan and Kaups 1989:120; Silver 1990).

### *Hunting*

In Webb's work, *The Great Frontier*, a French frontier traveler is cited for this comment about settlers, " 'once hunters, farewell to the plow' " (Webb 1964:58). One of the enticements for frontier settlers of the Great Valley and the Appalachians was the abundance of wild game. Not including wolf bounties, the three most frequently hunted animals were wild turkey, white-tailed deer and black bear. Hunted as well, but less frequently, were elk, bison, other birds including waterfowl and small mammals. The hides of elk and deer were important enough to bring significant pecuniary yields by way of the skin trade (Mitchell 1972; Silver 1990). In the Shenandoah Valley, settlers could defer the payment on their land until a good hunting season passed--six to seven elk hides or 30 deerskins could buy 100 acres of land

(Mitchell 1972:467-468; Otto 1989). With the worth of skins so high, some hunted year round (Silver 1990), and until the Revolutionary War the Cherokees interacted with Anglo settlers by trading skins (Hatley 1989:236). By the mid-eighteenth century the southern frontier areas and backwoods were sending 150,000 deerskins a year to Charleston (Silver 1990:92-93). But as one author notes, "No man ever got rich from hunting" (Arnow 1960:155). Though seen as a diversion, many people did hunt to supplement their diet of grains and wild flora or to send a few skins along with their agricultural produce to markets. As Jordan and Kaups note, in the backwoods frontier, where people paid their taxes with skins, wild game and resources were chosen more frequently than domesticates (1989:211,214). Money and meat aside, many hunted animals because they enjoyed it and it symbolized different things in various contexts, as shall be discussed later (Jordan and Kaups 1989; Kegley and Kegley 1980; Robinson 1979).

### *Elite and Non-Elite*

What is clear from research done on the economic history of the region (Great Valley/Appalachian Frontier) is that a small group of elite dominated the political and, to some degree, social climate of the western Virginia frontier (Tillson 1991:20). This group was of, or had strong ties to, the East. Another component of this relationship, however, is the role of ethnically diverse settlers who had their own constructs of status and power, as well as a working knowledge of the symbols used by the English gentry. A frontier traveler of the 1780s noted: "There is much greater disparity between the rich and the poor, in Virginia, than in any of the Northern States" (Morse [1789] 1970:390). As shown by Isaac (1982), the eastern gentry, or tobacco culture, had a distinct way of life that was made possible by the tobacco boom

of the previous century (116). Much social movement, including frontier settlement, was dictated by the actions of prominent families and individuals in the East (Isaac 1982; Mitchell 1991). Tillson refers to the relationship between the gentry, who were expanding their influence to the frontier regions (while the underclass sought escape from this influence) and the non-gentry as “deferential culture” (1991:28). The relationship pivoted on the realization that the gentry controlled many aspects of the world and one would benefit most from this relationship if they acted with deference toward the rich. The elite established institutions that “served an essential unifying function; they were the centers where all of the complex lines of economic power, personal influence, and prestige intersected” (Beeman 1978:458). These included the rule of courts, where symbolic action enacted power (Isaac 182:93), English county system laws (Otto 1989), the military presence (e.g. militia), and the church. The symbols that the elite used and rivalry between members of the elite, aspects that members of the underclass could literally not afford to partake in, reinforced power through action. As Beeman (1978) points out, the authority of the gentry “radiated out into a wider world, depending not only on the strength of their kinship relations but also on their important role in the inspecting and marketing of tobacco and their participation in the credit network and the larger political culture...” (458). Some of the symbolic actions used by the elite originated in the Old Country, while others had recently come from wealth acquired in the New World. Many of the symbolic customs associated with the institutions mentioned prior were quite efficacious in signaling identity amongst and between the predominantly British population of eastern Virginia and the Chesapeake. Where some of these practices met conflict was on the Virginia Frontier.

### *Conflict*

It could be argued that special attention has been given to issues concerning culture and culture change on the frontier because it is here that elements of elite culture, or those who exhibit some hegemonic control over resources, ideas, etc., come into contact, or conflict, with the non-elite (immigrants, indentured servants, etc.). The elite might make efforts to extend their will to previously unsettled regions, but effecting ideological (symbolic) control is dependent on at least some common understanding by all actors in a situation. The frontier is a unique meeting point for its basic lack of established structure. In a sense, those who meet on the frontier are more on equal footing, culturally, than they would be elsewhere.

The institutions above (e.g. organized law and/or militias) were challenged frequently. Tillson notes that the conflict on the frontier indicates:

“...the development of an alternative popular political culture that reflected the realities of small-scale agriculture, the preference for less hierarchical, more concensual styles of leadership, and an attachment primarily to local neighborhoods rather than to county, colony, or empire” (1991:63).

Two examples of insubordination within the context of this study are the challenges the Anglican Church faced from Presbyterians and the uncommitted attitudes of members of the militia. Both represent a loosening of cultural structure and the reinforcement of non-elite symbols (Tillson 1991:44).

Situated on the mid-eighteenth century frontier were numerous of the so-called “dissenting churches” (i.e. Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, and German Reformed) and the first Anglican Vestry in Augusta County was attended by mostly Presbyterians (Robinson 1979:227-228). The Presbyterians (the “paramount Scots-Irish institution”) identified themselves more with their denomination than with their ethnicity (Keller 1991:79,81).

They were quick to establish schools and churches where an Anglican presence existed (Keller 1991:80-81). The Scots-Irish immigrants who made up the Presbyterian Church did not attempt to emulate the gentry of the East, nor did their church attempt to convert non-Presbyterians as the Anglican Church did (Keller 1991:76). Isaac points out that as the strong authority of the Anglican Church was challenged, so too was the authority associated with wealth and power (1982:141). Similar power dynamics may be reflected through behavior of frontier militias.

In local militias, as Rhys Isaac (1982) notes, “important exchanges” took place, “establishing and reinforcing social bonds” (108). If this is true then gambling, desertion on long marches, and other forms of insubordination represent acceptable (to the non-elite) “social bonds.” The militias were often reported to be unruly, undependable and frequently “would not obey orders” (Kegley and Kegley 1980:55). When the French moved strategically into the Ohio Valley during the 1750s, the frontier military leaders (for Augusta County) could not raise a militia (Tillson 1991:48). Tillson notes that much of the conflict that arose within militias was due to tension between “elite and popular ideals of leadership” (1991:51).

Another conflict that I propose existed was over the role of hunting in frontier regions--who was culturally “sanctioned” to perform it? While the gentry, or elite, hunted for diversion and sport, those hunters who were non-elite were regarded as idle if they partook in this endeavor (Jakle 1977). The English tradition of hunting game animals by aristocratic land owners existed before feudal times. The elite attached some ownership to the natural world--the conflict arose when non-elite members of society challenged this natural born *right*. The legendary folk hero and outlaw Robin Hood was a poacher and thief who stole from the rich and gave to the poor. Wild game on

the lands of the rich were off-limits to the poor. Hunting as an “elite pastime” was certainly transplanted to the New World as were the heavy penalties for poaching (Bowen 1975; Manning-Sterling 1994:50-51; Mouer 1993; Silver 1990:96; Yentsch 1994). A wealthy Virginian, Thomas Walker, kept a journal during a 1750 southwestern hunting trip where many animals were killed (e.g. 13 buffalo, 8 elk, 53 bears, 20 deer, 4 geese, 150 turkeys and three times that amount could have been taken according to Walker) (Kegley and Kegley 1980:82). This form of hunting was seen as sport whereas hunting by people who *should be* farmers or self-supporting laborers was seen as indolence (Jakle 1977). And because some spent much time pursuing game (Silver 1990) they were said to “...live like savages. Hunting is their chief occupation” (Robinson 1979:148).

The conflict in perception rests, perhaps, in the notion that the elite and non-elite competed for actions that signified status and power relations with resources neither group could claim to own. Similarly, hunting might have acted as a ranking symbol among members of the immigrant non-elite who sought to pronounce their more justified claim to the land and materials they possessed.

## CHAPTER IV

### INTERPRETATION

“Not being wrong is not the same thing as being right. But since, despite the social science talk of “crucial tests of theories,” we don’t prove things right or wrong, the real test has always been how useful or interesting that way of looking at things is to an audience. If you look at things from a sociological perspective, what can you see what used to be invisible? (Becker 1986:2)

#### *The Frontier and Food--Symbolizing Status*

Judging from the faunal data presented in Chapter four, the persons who occupied the site during the 1750s, presumably Alexander Sayers and his family, mixed a diet of domestic food sources and wild species. As stated previously this is not an extraordinary fact about frontier living conditions. People modified their diet, perhaps enhanced it with wild species of flora and fauna, to suit their needs in an oftentimes new, but certainly challenging, environment. It was also noted earlier that some people on the frontier, whether visiting or settling, spent much of their time hunting and obtaining large numbers of wild game (e.g. the Walker expedition). The contrast in how and why one hunted, I believe, is based on wealth and relative status. Sources have indicated that for the elite, hunting was a right and for the non-elite it was a privilege--in England, Europe, and especially in the seventeenth century Chesapeake (Manning-Sterling 1994:17; Miller 1986).

Traditional anthropological approaches to the frontier have not considered the practice of individual settlers and the effects of wealth and status on their actions. Settlement and behavior pattern enthusiasts account for aberrations from their models as “adaptations to unique circumstances”. I propose that

every action on the frontier is a unique circumstance and how individuals act throughout these circumstances forms their place, or identity, within the larger social milieu. The diet of one individual points toward more than shifting adaptive patterns moving predictably according to evolution from diffused to focused diet. This should be perceived as a overarching trend with variability as expansive as the individuals who made-up frontier settlement. It leads one to ponder the meaning of wild food sources in a context of loosened cultural categories, conflict between members of the elite and non-elite and interaction amongst individuals of different social and ethnic backgrounds.

#### *Food Status*

Status associated with faunal remains has involved many courses of interpretation. Evidence of choice meat cuts and delicacy items is one method of examining how people manifest status (Schulz and Gust 1983); the other involves diversity of species on a site. A more diverse diet, one of wild and domesticates mixed, is indicative of higher status (Honerkamp 1979; Manning-Sterling 1994; Miller 1984) especially if venison and beef are emphasized more than pork (Miller 1984:353). Another facet of status indicative foods is cost--this includes the time spent to obtain the food source, rarity of dietary elements and danger involved (Reitz 1985). It is assumed that a wealthier household could afford more risks on all counts (Reitz 1985:6).

Sport hunting represents a leisure activity followed by those who had the time and resources to participate. Historically, venison has been designated a status food item and was the object of such hunting practices. Many other wild species have as well been linked to status, but deer symbolize the gentry



style hunting of the Old Country (Yentsch 1994:247-248,254). Possessing this type of food source is no different than expressing wealth through other media. Putting on the latest fashions, owning the newest china, or consuming culturally prescribed delicacies signifies status.

In a recent study of fur trade archaeology, Charles Ewen (1986) examines faunal remains to distinguish relative wealth and the imposed social hierarchy between two competing fur companies. He cites several historical references placing certain meat cuts and organs as sought after and prized food items (1986:20-21). Ewen uses choice meat from two species, white-tailed deer and beaver, to determine status. He points out that most delicacy items from the deer would not be manifest through archaeological remains (e.g. hearts, liver, other viscera), but fracturing of the mandible suggests tongue extraction (1986:21). To obtain the tongue of a deer, the ascending ramus is fractured either by a pulling force or hacked with a blade of some sort.

The Sayers' assemblage provides evidence of this process of tongue extraction for white-tailed deer. Fifteen of the deer mandibles identified are fractured in a manner that suggests hacking of the ascending ramus and mandibular joint. The practice of removing a culturally determined delicacy may be interpreted as effort on the part of individual to show status-related choice. There existed in most frontier situations an abundance of game animals perceived culturally as status foods, probably a result of the exclusiveness of hunting these animals with impunity. By examining an individual's choice in diet it is possible to understand context-bound values and perceptions (*emic perspective*).

The assemblage yielded a minimum of four black bears. Wildlife associated with danger might include this species. Winter raiding of dens for bear

involved crawling inside their hibernation alcove (Arnow 1960). Bears were hunted with enjoyment, and it was thought beneficial to rid the forests of this creature as it posed a threat to livestock as well as humans (Jordan and Kaups 1989:213,215). Also perceived as a delicacy item, bear meat and other parts of the animal adorned the tables of members of the gentry, particularly with skulls cleaved along the mid-sagittal axis for profile appearance on the table (Faulkner and Faulkner 1987:225; Mennell 1985). Bear remains from the Sayers' site suggest butchering elsewhere, since mostly long bones are present in the faunal assemblage. An alternative interpretation might suggest the head and feet were kept as trophy items if the animals were indeed perceived as such.

Based on the number of wild specimens in the Sayers' diet, it seems obvious that someone spent much time afield and less time raising animals for profit. Evidence of goose, duck, Phasianidae, quail and turkey elements add to this fact. Wild-birds were, and are still, delicacy food items usually associated with the gentry's diversionary practice of birding (Manning-Sterling 1994:51; Noël Hume 1978). Birding for amusement increased during the British occupation of Fort Michilimakinac, a marked difference from the French occupation (Cleland 1970).

In her study of early New River Valley settlement, Mary Kegley (1975) probes wills and appraisals for the years 1745-1786 to gain an understanding of what types of possessions frontier people in this area had. It has been noted elsewhere that documents of this type tend to be less biased than diaries and personal narratives of quotidian events as they reflect more the voice of the common, rather than the elite speaking for many (Deetz 1977; Glassie 1975:10).

What Kegley discovered were unexpectedly high percentages of some possessions and low percentages for others. Two of her findings of interest to the concerns of this paper are (1) a high percentage of cattle and horses mentioned, and (2) a low percentage of firearms (Kegley 1975:abstract; Kegley and Kegley 1980). She notes that 70-80% of all estates owned cattle from the time of the area's earliest settlement with an average of 12.6 cattle per estate (1975:44). The men with large numbers of cattle were a small group within the overall population. Knowing the benefits and profits of free-range cattle raising, perhaps these individuals bought expansive tracts of land for essentially wooded cattle ranches. Cattle were very important to settlers of this area as their breeds, colors and food by-products were noted in documents (Kegley 1975:43). Kegley adds that most cattle were raised for beef and by-products with little evidence existing for their use as beasts of burden (1975:48). Kegley shows that twelve of the estates she studied that date between 1745-1769 had 189 cattle, or 12 per estate--a high amount for the first years of frontier settlement (1975:43-44). A local surveyor, John Buchanon, had 48 cattle in his estate (Kegley 1975:43-44). This is also an interesting comparison to the findings of MacMaster (1991) who notes that in frontier settings far more people had one or two cattle than three (134) and Beeman (1978) shows that raising cattle was a viable alternative for the slave-labor deprived frontier (457). Kegley also points out the low number of hogs mentioned in the early inventories: For the years 1745-1769, 87 percent of the estates evaluated from Augusta County did not own pigs, or they were not cited (1975:60). Another interesting finding by Kegley is the limited number of weapons referred to in estates. She found that out of 100 estates only 27 mentioned firearms, for a total of 44 guns--only ten of which are referred to as "rifles" (1975:Abstract).

Much of this information suggests different food resources were chosen by different individuals in mid-eighteenth century Augusta County, Virginia. What approaches that focus on adaptation and the “stabilization of cultural processes” fail to inspect is the meaning behind the choices people make (Miller 1984:386). Every action has meaning. The action may be pertinent to the context in which it originates or the meaning may be prescribed by someone separated from the context of knowing. Either way, it is through interpretation and re-interpretation of context that fragments of meaning come to light (Isaac 1982:325). It involves an understanding of context that is thorough enough to link oneself with the choices individuals made and to understand their actions within their context of meaning--for interpretation is “context bound” (Bohman, et al. 1991:12).

### *Symbolizing Status*

In an attempt to understand how individuals signify their identity, status, ethnicity, etc., it is useful to begin with Barth’s description of “cultural ascription” (1969:13). As mentioned in chapter one, this is one’s most basic identity, or the way an individual sees her/himself within a group--it is knowing who one’s people are. One’s place might be called *habitus* since it entails membership to prescribed practices and principles of knowing accumulated from life experiences beginning with enculturation. The interaction that occurs between individuals serves to reinforce one’s place and uphold the principles of practicality necessary to get by. Individuals have the ability to change their lives, the lives of others and through action have the potential to alter their understanding of *habitus*.

Interaction occurs in many forms, but all interaction is symbolic. All forms of posture, gesture, and/or verbal utterance symbolize. I am concerned with

how an individual symbolizes identity. This too can take on countless forms; I shall focus on the “concrete evidence” of symbolizing identity through material culture, in this case faunal remains (Royce 1982:8). To cite Royce’s point again, symbols which are defined through interaction have the most potency (1982:148); the mediation over material objects takes on this influence.

### *Context of Meaning*

To rephrase the title of this section into “meaning of context”--is equally the goal of a contextual analysis of meaning, in this case, the meaning of the faunal assemblage attributed to the Alexander Sayers’ occupation of the Fort Chiswell site. For interpretation to be potentially revealing it must be placed in time and space. Since the goal of this interpretation is to understand human action, it is readily apparent how crucial an understanding of context, the context of action/interaction, is (Shanks and Tilley 1992). When interpretation takes place the role of the interpreter in relation to the research must be addressed.

Unlike positivistic theories which rely on assumed objectivity, the biases in an interpretive approach are brought out into the open and are not seen as negative entities but are rather perceived as substantive additions to qualitative statements. This form of holism necessitates a reflexive stance by the interpreter--one where the relationship between archaeologist in the context of contemporary researcher is included within the context being interpreted, a context in the perceived past (Hodder 1987; Hodder 1991). For this purpose no conclusion shall be offered for this analysis. In keeping with the interpretive approach, conclusion is never reached--the interpretative

comments of this paper only may be added to and hermeneutic circles continue.

### *Interpretation and Discussion*

An interpretation of the Sayers' faunal assemblage must be offered. This is the starting point for meaningful knowledge about the types of interaction that occur in frontier situations. It has already been discussed that functional interpretations of data offer no real insight about symbols, meaning and action.

#### *Alexander Sayers--the individual*

What we know from the relatively benign history of public records is that Alexander Sayers came to the frontier from Pennsylvania, a point of departure for thousands of this period. Most of the Scots-Irish and German immigrants settled in Pennsylvania and subsequently the western part of this state or due South along the mountains and valleys that demarcated the frontier zone. The land in this part of Virginia was cheap. During early settlement, large tracts were bought by relatively wealthy individuals leaving little "first rate land" after 1753 (Kegley and Kegley 1980:9). Likewise, these wealthy few maintained far more material goods than most of their fellow settlers. Sayers came to the frontier with his father and brother. It is difficult to assess the relative wealth of the people mentioned in the records, but Sayers purchased a sizable parcel of land (504 acres) even in terms of the frontier; his parcel is larger than average frontier parcels, but could be the result of obligatory settlement land grants. Later he bought other parcels although his right to ownership is questioned in the documents (Hazard and McCartney 1976:8). In the records he is known to have been a captain and is

referred to as “Gent.,” for gentleman (Hazzard and McCartney 1976:6). He is noted for having complained about losing some property, as well as being upset about the military damaging some of his property (which was actually not his), and appearing in court while inebriated (Hazzard and McCartney 1976:5,7). Sayers paid to have his son educated in New London (Hazzard and McCartney 1976:8). Alexander Sayers drowned in the New River in 1765, but before his death his “Fort Chiswell” land was under mortgage and he was virtually insolvent--it appears that the man had lost his chance with the frontier and the wealth it offered others.

It is suggested here that Sayers, though never really possessing much, signaled an identity of prestige and respect regularly associated with the elite. Members of the elite also met penury, but being part of an institutional class provided more safeguards and supports to fall back upon (Tillson 1991). This situation must have been different for non-elite, immigrant class persons who had obvious conflict with the established institutions of the elite (e.g. Sayers problems with land ownership and court indictment). The Augusta County election riot of 1755 and strict deer hunting rules symbolize elite/non-elite conflict as well (Tillson 1991:32,39). To gain similar rights of access to resources, including land and natural resources, subjects perhaps donned the actions of wealth and prestige (Kristiansen 1989). This display interaction acts as a means of signaling to fellow frontierspeople, whether elite or non-elite, the respect necessary to gain wealth on the frontier. In this case, one’s actions and his material by-products play a role that “actively mediates intentions, strategies, attitudes and ideologies” (Shanks and Tilley 1987:107).

The behavior associated with hunting symbolized far more than free time to pursue game and experience sport, for symbols compact many meanings

about one or more subjects into visible actions (Rowntree and Conkey 1980:460). The symbolic act of hunting for food and the leisure time involved is the way I suggest Sayers signaled identity to his compeers in the area. Trigger notes that “high-status groups actively use material culture [food as well] to legitimize their authority” (1989:348). Here, two alternative explanations may be offered to best place Sayers’ hunting practices.

The first of these suggests he was signaling to fellow whites. By signaling the identity of the elite, he better positioned himself for business (mill keeper) and wealth (Tillson 1991). The meaning of hunting in the context of the eighteenth century has been mentioned earlier, but it should be stated again that as an entity practiced by the upper level element of a rigid, class system, it acted as a boundary reinforcement. That is, the right to hunt was limited to the elite as it was a carryover from the Old World and the feudal system (Jordan and Kaups 1989; Yentsch 1994). This access and practice reinforced the symbolic power of the elite and their “predestined” authority over others.

Alternatively, Sayers was perhaps affected by the frequent interactions with Natives. Often the focus on white immigrants who changed because of frontier conditions discludes the interactive forces on all ethnicities involved. Since the histories of these regions have been written by and for whites the native population is seen as part of the untamable, but soon tamed, environment. Elements of the “American Spirit” are credited to Native American traits but as White points out, in the adoption, or development of these traits “Only whites changed. Indians disappeared” (1991:ix). It could be suggested that Sayers’ interaction with natives, (viz. Cherokee people) would explain the large numbers of wild food remains as is suggested by Mouer for a similar, albeit earlier, seventeenth century frontier site (1993:115). Practice and signaling identity is manifest when:



People try to persuade others who are different from themselves by appealing to what they perceive to be the values and practices of those others. They often misinterpret and distort both the values and the practices of those they deal with, but from these misunderstandings arise new meanings and through them new practices--the shared meanings and practices of the middle ground (White 1992:x).

The native presence is one that was felt on all parts of the frontier and was not easily ignored. Practicing hunting and consuming a diet such as that of Native Americans may have offered Sayers another *in*. Perhaps Sayers as a non-member of the elite found more solidarity with the people who used resistance not to signal, but to survive.

It is a large leap to look for the vestiges of attitude in archaeological remains. Perhaps defining the identity of the subject should be the first step in any anthropological analysis. Like learning the point of view of *the other*, we learn most what is used to define membership within "identity-conscious social groups," how people demarcate themselves from each other (Stevenson 1989:292). This demarcation rests within the realm of action, and practice theory holds that the context of action is replete with responsive "schemes" that take the shape of "institutional, symbolic, and material forms" (Ortner 1984:148). Like words, objects symbolize--the meaning we seek is within the context of action and the meaning we ascribe. Some might see interpretation as bias-laden thinking. This is true if one assumes objectivity is possible--this paper does not and admits influences from many sources.

The influences of this paper are essentially interpretations of a different nature. Myths perpetuated about the frontier shape most perceptions. Olsen (1991) argues that myths "universalize the world as immediate, self-evident, and without contradictions whereby the dominant order is presented as the natural order" (167). The individualism, ruggedness, and ingenuity of

frontiersmen are imbued into the minds of American students from elementary school onward. Since the traits of frontier people are glorified as essential American elements, one must question the footing on which these premises stand. It is not the goal of this research to challenge American frontier dogma and the *idée fixe* of its associated American identity; rather, by inspecting micro-situations and the actions that occurred there, we may better grasp the significance of peremptory conceptions that provide the basis of this *identity*. This in turn may lead to understandings of how identity works on any plane and in any situation, for, the same forces that compelled people to move to frontier regions and establish, or signify, identity are indubitably related to the perpetuation of roles, classes and identities in the contemporary world.

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