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## Wealth and Society in Eighteenth Century Bermuda: A View from the Colonial Capital of St George's

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WEALTH AND SOCIETY IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BERMUDA:  
A VIEW FROM THE COLONIAL CAPITAL OF ST. GEORGE'S

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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

Cara Anne Harbecke Metz

1994

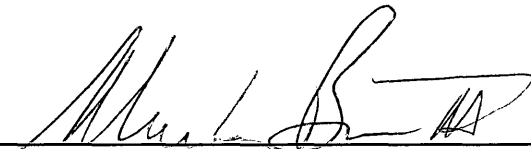
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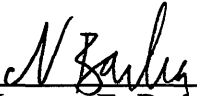
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....  | vi   |
| LIST OF FIGURES.....   | vii  |
| ABSTRACT.....  | ix   |
| CHAPTER I. CONSUMPTION PATTERNS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH.....   | 2    |
| CHAPTER II. MATERIAL GOODS TO CULTURAL MEANING: THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO PROBATE INVENTORIES..... | 10   |
| a. Defining Material Culture   |      |
| b. Probate Inventories   |      |
| c. Accounting for Bias in Probate Inventory Analysis   |      |
| d. Previous Approaches to Probate Inventories  |      |
| e. Categories Used to Identify Changes in Worldview and Wealth                                     |      |
| 1. Items of Absolute Value   |      |
| 2. Adornment   |      |
| 3. Implied Value   |      |
| 4. Social Ceremony   |      |
| f. The Material World of the Chesapeake  |      |
| 1. Background of Data Used in Comparison   |      |

CHAPTER III. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF BERMUDA, 1609-1799..... 23

- a. Early History
- b. Economic Transition
- c. The Growing Population
- d. St. George's
- e. Bermuda Within the Larger System

CHAPTER IV. DISCUSSION OF PROBATE INVENTORIES FROM ST. GEORGE'S, BERMUDA, 1700-1799..... 38

- a. Methodology
  - 1. Differences in Data
  - 2. Categories
- b. Williamsburg
  - 1. First Third of Eighteenth Century
  - 2. Second Third of Eighteenth Century
  - 3. Last Third of Eighteenth Century
  - 4. Summary of Bermuda-Williamsburg Comparison
- c. Annapolis
  - 1. Napkins
  - 2. Sets of Cups and Saucers
  - 3. Tea Tables
  - 4. Sets of Forks
  - 5. Clocks and Watches
  - 6. Summary of Bermuda-Williamsburg Comparison

|                       |  |    |
|-----------------------|--|----|
| CHAPTER V.            | D E T E R M I N I N G R E A S O N S F O R<br>DIFFERENCE..... | 70 |
|                       | a. Similarities and Differences                              |    |
|                       | b. Reasons for Difference                                    |    |
|                       | 1. Economy   |    |
|                       | 2. Diverse Population  |    |
|                       | 3. Social Stress and Competition                             |    |
|                       | c. Conclusion and Additional Observations                    |    |
| REFERENCES CITED..... |  | 92 |
| VITA.....             |  | 98 |

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## LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure   | Page |
|--|------|
| 1. Map of Bermuda Showing Location of St. George's.....                | 24   |
| 2. Atlantic Trade Routes in the Eighteenth Century.....                | 29   |
| 3. Detail of Map of Bermuda Showing St. George's, 1739.....            | 34   |
| 4. Drawing of St. George's, 1780.....                                  | 35   |
| 5. Incidence of Selected Consumer Items, St. George's, 1700-1733.....  | 44   |
| 6. Incidence of Selected Consumer Items, Williamsburg, 1700-1732.....  | 45   |
| 7. Incidence of Selected Consumer Items, St. George's, 1734-1766.....  | 48   |
| 8. Incidence of Selected Consumer Items, Williamsburg, 1733-1767.....  | 49   |
| 9. Incidence of Selected Consumer Items, St. George's, 1767-1799.....  | 51   |
| 10. Incidence of Selected Consumer Items, Williamsburg, 1768-1777..... | 52   |
| 11. Presence of Napkins in Annapolis, Maryland.....                    | 55   |
| 12. Presence of Napkins in St. George's, Bermuda.....                  | 57   |
| 13. Presence of Cups and Saucers, Annapolis, Maryland.....             | 58   |
| 14. Presence of Cups and Saucers, St. George's, Bermuda.....           | 60   |
| 15. Presence of Tea Tables, Annapolis, Maryland.....                   | 61   |
| 16. Presence of Tea Tables, St. George's, Bermuda.....                 | 62   |
| 17. Presence of Sets of Forks, Annapolis, Maryland.....                | 65   |



|     |  |    |
|-----|--|----|
| 18. | Presence of Sets of Forks, St. George's, Bermuda.....  | 66 |
| 19. | Presence of Clocks, Annapolis, Maryland.....   | 67 |
| 20. | Presence of Clocks/Watches, St. George's, Bermuda.....   | 68 |
| 21. | Registry of Vessels Calling in St. George's, 1716.....   | 75 |
| 22. | Registry of Vessels Calling in St. George's, 1750.....   | 76 |
| 23. | Drawing of Verdmont, Devonshire Parish, Bermuda.....   | 84 |
| 24. | Drawing of Springfield, Sandy's Parish, Bermuda.....   | 86 |
| 25. | Comparison of Chinese Tea and Table Wares in Barraud<br>Draper, and Tucker Archaeological Assemblages..... | 90 |

## **ABSTRACT**

Using probate inventories from St. George's Parish, the economic development of the British colony of Bermuda during the period 1700 to 1799 is examined. The nature of material goods in Bermuda during this period is considered using a comparative model of the Chesapeake, where a notable increase in material goods has been observed in probate inventories from the latter part of the eighteenth century and has been linked to significant changes in the "world view" of the colonists. These changes of mindset from a yeoman to a Georgian perspective have been documented in other colonial areas, beginning with the work of Henry Glassie (1975) and James Deetz (1977). In this thesis, probate inventory data from the British Colonial Capitals of Annapolis, Maryland and Williamsburg, Virginia are used for comparison to St. George's, Bermuda to measure the changing market demand for material goods and the degree of Georgianization.

**WEALTH AND SOCIETY IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BERMUDA:  
A VIEW FROM THE COLONIAL CAPITOL OF ST. GEORGE'S**

## CHAPTER I

### CONSUMPTION PATTERNS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

A number of profound changes took place in the colonies along the eastern seaboard of North America during the eighteenth century. Much of society experienced a transition from a crude, insular existence to an orderly, more cosmopolitan society between the end of the seventeenth century and the middle of the eighteenth century (Glassie 1975; Deetz 1977; Leone 1988). Historians and historical archaeologists alike have demonstrated that this period is marked by a significant increase in material culture. This increase is accompanied by a growing segmentation of goods as in the ownership of matched sets of dishes and utensils as well as highly specialized ware types. Many of these material goods are associated with the social ceremony surrounding the newly acquired taste for tea and otherwise entertaining and displaying fashion. The general trend towards increasing gentility affected all segments of society to varying degrees (Bushman 1992). While scholars have long recognized the incredible proliferation of material goods during this "consumer revolution," the causes and the reasons for different rates of change in different regions and the exact dynamics causing these changes have not been as clearly understood.

Changes in consumption patterns indicate that attitudes about the surrounding world have changed. James Deetz (1977) has shown that in the case of British colonial society during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the changes speak directly to overall changes in worldview. Drawing on the work of Henry Glassie (1975), Deetz suggests that the world view of colonists in America changed from an organic, yeoman view to an ordered, segmented outlook. These changes have been linked to the ever increasing desire to emulate British society and maintain the latest London fashions. Changes of this nature have been noted in a number of colonial societies, and research has further indicated that by the mid-eighteenth century, British colonies in different locations all had similar characteristics. Jack Greene (1988) argues that just prior to the American Revolution, these colonies were in fact more alike than they were different from one another. Deetz takes this argument further, saying that the colonies were in fact more "English" on the eve of the revolution than they had been since their arrival in America (Deetz 1973; 1977). The British colonial system was linked by a trade network that included Bermuda, the Caribbean, the areas along the North American coast including Halifax, Nova Scotia, and what eventually became the United States. The types of material culture seen in these areas are the same as those seen in England with a little time lag before their appearance (Carr and Walsh n.d.:1).

The increase in, and the type of material culture seen was due in large part to ideas that had been formulated during the Renaissance period in Europe almost two centuries earlier. The Renaissance marked the beginning of a new age of art, intellect,

and exploration. Europe emerged from the Middle Ages questioning the nature of things and pushing back the known limits of the world around them. Architecture, art, and style became concerned with order and symmetry. New continents were discovered, bringing Europeans into contact with exotic animals, plants, and people. Despite the immensity of the discoveries during this period, during the early seventeenth century, England and most of Europe continued to cling to a medieval existence. The Plague, land shortages, famines, and deforestation made for little opportunity in England. The New World held promise, yet most of the people who set sail for the British colonies in North America during the early seventeenth century possessed this medieval mindset. Over the next two centuries, the colonists slowly felt the effects of the Renaissance, culminating in the "Georgian" order that reached its height towards the end of the eighteenth century.

Three basic phases or "cultural systems" have been identified in British colonial America which trace Anglo-American cultural development throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Deetz 1973; 1977). The first period corresponds with the earliest phase of colonization beginning in 1607 and continuing through 1660. North American colonial society remained "English" in essence during this period. Despite the need to adapt to environments which differed vastly from England and the adoption of somewhat different settlement patterns and customs, settlers maintained lifestyles they had known previously. Continued immigration from England worked to reinforce the ties with the homeland and colonists depended on manufactured goods from Europe

(Deetz 1977:36). The material culture from this period reflects a truly yeoman mindset. Artifact types reflect the communal existence of the Stuart yeoman. Architectural and landscape design lack segmentation and private areas, and the few ceramics in use reflect the relative unimportance of ceramics to foodways. The communal trenchers and goblets common in these early households emphasize the lack of individual utensils and segmented wares (Deetz 1973:26).

The worldview of New World immigrants began to change towards the end of the first period. Economic depression beginning in the 1630s and the political upheaval over the next two decades led to reduced immigration and diverted attention from the colonies. Without sustained immigration, American-born colonists began to outnumber and replace English-born immigrants. All of these factors combined to isolate the colonies and weaken the ties to home. As a result, lifeways in the colonies began to diverge from those in England.

The second period, which developed between 1660 and 1760, witnessed a continued divergence from the parent culture (Deetz 1973; 1977). The Crown was restored in 1660 and with it, renewed interest in colonial North America. Trade increased during the second half of the seventeenth century while immigration resumed, albeit on a smaller scale than before. Deetz has observed that ceramic assemblages from New England dating from 1660 to 1760 reflect a substantial increase in the types and forms of new ceramics (Deetz 1973:27). Deetz argues that "this second cultural system

was a typical folk culture, marked by strong conservatism, resistance to change, and considerable regional variation" (Deetz 1973:17). Rural areas remained conservative and resisted change well into the eighteenth century. The "Strong, traditional cultures" developed during this period were reinforced in part by "poor transportation and communication facilities" as well as strong local affiliation (Deetz 1977:38).

Finally, English colonial society experienced a "re-anglicanization" after 1760 (Deetz 1977:38). While the first two periods show a divergence from the English pattern, the material culture of the third period reveals a convergence. The full impact of ideas first formulated during the Renaissance effected all levels of colonial society. This period is described as "Georgian," a term coined to describe the distinct architectural form which reached its height during this period, because of the growing concern for balance and form in all aspects of society (Deetz 1977:39). There is an explosion in the amount of material culture as artifact forms are elaborated to meet specific uses. This, in part, also reflects new tastes for foreign and exotic goods. The material culture also reveals a greater individualism and increased structure as the period continues. For example, architectural space is segmented to provide public and private space, as well as rooms for specific activities. Foodways are transformed from taking food from a few communal pieces to dining from individual table settings consisting of an elaborate array of glasses, cups, plates, bowls, and utensils. These innovations speak to fundamental changes in society as a whole. Indeed, the eighteenth century witnessed great developments in the arts, political philosophy, and the sciences on both sides of the



Atlantic.

The presence of material culture in the colonies changed over time in response to changes in availability, need, function, and social changes (Deetz 1973:19). Furthermore, research has shown that this cultural progression is evident in many forms of material culture including houses, tombstones, ceramics, furniture and gardens (e.g. Glassie 1975; Deetz 1977; Leone 1988). The fact that this trend is reflected in many different forms of material culture shows that these data are truly dynamic. Just as people use artifacts as an extrasomatic means of interacting with their environment, material culture quickly adapts in response to changes in the condition of the world around them. Glassie argues that "People adapted to...changes, developing new modes of thought, and the things they did, the artifacts they made, manifested the changes that had taken place in their minds" (Glassie 1975:189-190). Material culture changed in response to the needs and desires of people, especially later in the eighteenth century when items such as ceramics changed quickly to keep up with the insatiable desire of popular culture.

It has been well over a decade since Glassie and Deetz introduced their work on the "Georgianization" of British colonial areas in America. By and large, their ideas have come to be widely accepted. This does not mean, however, that this model is necessarily applicable to all British colonies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In *Ceramics from Plymouth, 1620-1835* (Deetz 1973), Deetz advises scholars

that his model for explaining the cultural significance of ceramics should be "open to correction, refinement, or rejection" and that this model should, in the very least, "indicate directions to follow in our inquiry into the cultural significance of the artifacts we unearth" (Deetz 1973:15-16,38). While the general trend of cultural development from a yeoman existence to a Georgian mindset was evident in most areas, the pattern varied in response to distinct regional conditions. Mark Leone stresses that the "knowledge of the local context of use and meaning is essential if we are to understand the material culture and mental order that made it" (1988:237). The pattern of this cultural transformation differs regionally due to of social, economic, religious, and political factors. In the case of the material culture from sites in Annapolis, Maryland, Leone observed that the "the rate of appearance of items may be tied to the penetration of merchant capitalism and crises within it" (1988:237).

The ideas of Georgianization and shifts in worldview have previously been only extensively explored in North American colonial areas and in England, yet the North American colonies were but part of a larger system. In recent years, scholars have begun to recognize the need to look at colonial systems as a whole. Indeed, Deetz recognized this when he argued that "we must broaden our view to a global perspective for the simple reason that we are dealing with a global phenomenon" (1991:2). The Chesapeake region, particularly the areas of earliest settlement along the coast of Virginia and Maryland, has been the focus of a number of studies regarding colonial economic development. Bermuda, another British colony established shortly after Jamestown, has

been largely neglected, however. Many aspects of Bermuda's development parallel the evolution of the Chesapeake economy. In short, Bermuda provides a unique opportunity to compare the influence of economy and other factors on changes in worldview. It is the intent of this thesis to compare research on probate inventories from the colonial capital of St. George's, Bermuda to data from two other colonial capitals, namely Annapolis, Maryland and Williamsburg, Virginia. Methodologies similar to those used by scholars of the Chesapeake were employed to measure the economic and social development of Bermuda in order to determine how the island colony fits into the model of the Georgianization of England and the British colonies during this period. Probate inventories were used to compare the nature of wealth and society in the colonies during the eighteenth century. By looking at the increase in material goods as seen in probate inventories over the course of the century, the shifts in material goods should reflect changes in ideas about the material world.

**CHAPTER II**  
**MATERIAL GOODS TO CULTURAL MEANING:**  
**THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO PROBATE INVENTORIES**

*Defining Material Culture*

Material culture could simply be defined as the physical remains of past human life, yet it is actually more than that. It is "the study, through artifacts, of the beliefs--values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions--of a particular community or society at a given time" (Prown 1988:18). It has been argued that material culture is more representative of a society as a whole because it portrays the lives of the illiterate or poor members of a group, who do not leave their impressions of life in personal accounts, letters, or travel diaries as those in higher socio-economic classes may have. In short, material culture is perhaps the most democratic source of information we have. People, regardless of status or color leave behind material remains.

Material culture is non-linguistic, yet taken together with documentary evidence, it is one of few ways to express vernacular relationships. In short, material culture reflects the basic human need to express one's worldview through forms as well as through language. That is, people identify with the things around them such as their

homes, their landscapes, and their belongings. "The underlying premise is that objects made or modified by man reflect, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of the individuals who made, commissioned, purchased, or used them and, by extension, the beliefs of the larger society to which they belonged" (Prown 1988:18). It is the underlying meaning of the material goods that is of interest here, as this is what gives insight into cultural behavior. As Paul Shackel states, "Consumer choice is to a large extent dependent upon the symbolic value of goods. Members of the same group will choose similar symbols and thereby construct the group's social boundaries" (Shackel 1993:163). Shackel further notes that "it seems likely that material goods associated with the creation of a modern discipline played a role in establishing the [social] hierarchy..." (1993:167).

Many of the material culture studies conducted within the Chesapeake have focused on the tobacco producing Virginia and Maryland region that was settled early in the British colonization of the New World. Annapolis and Williamsburg were both colonial capitals, and a number of studies exist in which material culture data has been compiled from these urban colonial regions. These provide a comparative model for Bermuda, and particularly the town of St. George's, another British colonial capital.

### *Probate Inventories*

Probate inventories are the lists of material things owned by a person at the time of their death. The probate record consists of wills, accounts of administration, and

inventories. Generally, upon a person's death, an executor named in the will (or an administrator appointed by the court if no executor was named or if the person died in testate) arranged for the estate to be appraised. It is important to note that estates normally only went through probate in the absence of a will, in disputes over inheritance, or in cases of insolvency. In most cases two or three appraisers familiar with the occupation of the deceased were appointed to inventory and assess the fair market value of the estate. In Bermuda, as in Virginia and Maryland, probate inventories typically list only the moveable property of the estate, leaving out land holdings (Carr and Walsh 1977:3). The descriptions of items listed in inventories range from the specific, including styles of objects, ware types, maker's marks, and modifiers suggesting age or size, to the general, such as a "lot" of earthenware or other miscellaneous items lumped together. In some cases inventories are conducted on a room by room basis, providing glimpses into household arrangement and possibly the divisions of public and private space within the household. In sum, probate inventories contain lists of "material culture" that can be quantified and measured.

Probate inventories are useful tools for historians, archaeologists, and others for providing information about the material culture present in a household. Where archaeology may provide more tactile and equally empirical data, a probate inventory lists with some degree of accuracy, the material culture present in a household at a given point in time. It is also possible to quantify changes in the material things present in households by comparing patterns of data from different years. Again, changes in the

material things that are found in households indicate that changes in consumer choice and, therefore, attitudes and values are taking place. It is these changes in ideas that are important to understand. "One does not learn of these changes much from letters, diaries, or other personal records, which do not abound in the Chesapeake, and where they exist tell us more about the rich than about the poor. One finds most of the answers to such questions in probate records" (Walsh 1983:9).

#### *Accounting for Bias in Probate Inventory Analysis*

It has long been recognized that probate inventories vary temporally as well as spatially. The detail of the recorder also plays an important role in how useful inventories are. For example, commonplace items or objects considered to be of little or no value may have been excluded from an inventory and may potentially account for bias. Bias in the form of omission can sometimes be accounted for depending on the methodology employed. As Carr and Walsh (1980:82) point out, "the presence of certain items might provide clues to the absence of others," that is, objects such as tubs for salting meat indicate that the person owns livestock.

Another problem with probate records is that they do not represent the entire population. The reason for this is that the vast majority of estates did not go through probate (Horn 1981:85-94). The very poor and slaves were often not recorded at all. As Carr and Walsh (1980:82) point out, however, inventories provide glimpses of society that are quite successful at yielding significant information about past lifeways. Overall,

bias should be recognized, but the value of probate inventory analysis cannot be underestimated.

### *Previous Approaches to Probate Inventories*

A number of different analyses have been facilitated using probate inventories, the range of which would be too great to list here. Data concerning wealth, diversity, and consumer behavior have been gathered through the analysis of these documents. Regional variation as well as variation between urban and rural communities can be studied through this approach (Carr and Walsh n.d.; Walsh n.d.; Shackel 1987). Studies comparing probate inventories from England and the British colonies have served to demonstrate the similarities in the types of material goods in the colonies and Britain (Carr and Walsh n.d.; Deetz 1977; Shamma 1990; Weatherill 1988), making it possible to chart the different rates of change in the nature of material goods in England and her colonies.

Scholars of the Chesapeake have looked for the presence or frequency of various items in probate inventories for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and have shown that the proliferation of material goods seen in records of the latter portion of the eighteenth century represents shifts in wealth-holding patterns. The transition to a more genteel society is marked by material goods that "indicated a wish to transform [a person's] environment and presumably himself along with it" (Bushman 1992:185). While costly goods may reflect the economic stature of the buyer, the items that are



central to these studies are for the most part non-essential items; that is, things that reflect changing lifestyles in that people not only have more expendable income but also have the desire to obtain goods to use for added comfort, finer dress, more elaborate household arrangement, and social ceremony such as serving tea and other forms of entertaining.

### *Categories Used to Identify Changes in Worldview and Wealth*

The types of things that are used to identify change in worldview and measure the proliferation of material goods during the eighteenth century are generally things that extend beyond basic human needs for shelter, clothing, and food. They are non-essential items that are meant to provide small comforts or decorate a home or display the fact that one understands how to be genteel. Various scholars have examined probate inventories and in doing so have looked for very different types of goods. The following are some of the categories of types of things often looked for.

#### Items of Absolute Value

Some items used to identify wealth are things that remained expensive throughout the eighteenth century and could only be afforded by the upper wealth groups. These included fineries such as silver, which is always seen as an indicator of wealth largely because fine metals are the standard by which currency is valued against.

Stored goods such as food items may also provide information about the economic

status of the decedent in addition to providing information about the nature of the foods available in a particular location at a given point in time. Items such as barrels of gin and hogsheads of grain must also be viewed as indicators of wealth because they suggest a person's ability to purchase large quantities at a time, as well as the ability to provide security against unexpected shortages. Households of merchants could also possibly be identified in this manner, as in one inventory from St. George's which contains entries such as "14.5 pounds of common sewing needles" and "26 dozen penknives, number 167" (Book of Wills Volume 6).

#### Adornment

Adornment is also considered important because it suggests that people are concerned with the way they appear to the outside, public world. Ownership of non-essential objects and decorative items indicates conspicuous consumption of material goods. A looking glass, for example, "with its suggestion of vanity and self-reflexivity, was an item of conspicuous consumption" (Sweeney 1988:266). Two types of adornment are generally considered to be indicators of wealth. The first of these is personal adornment and consists of items such as jewelry, wigs, silver buckles, and fine clothing. Fine fabric, which is found in several inventories, may also indicate that fine clothing was important in the household of the deceased. The second form of adornment is household adornment and is also frequently considered to be important in establishing wealth-holding patterns. Pictures, looking glasses, and other decorative objects suggest a level of gentility that was part of the social changes that took place in the eighteenth

century.

### Implied Value

Some items used to identify wealth holding patterns are chosen not because of what they are but because of their ability to provide further information about the lifestyle of the deceased. For example, ownership of a clock or other timepiece suggests that the person has some sort of schedule to maintain. Desks also imply that a person is literate. Lighting implements such as sconces, candlesticks, and oil lamps suggest that a person needs artificial light to go about activities after the sun has set. Ownership of musical instruments demonstrates that the owner has the time and desire to pursue a wider range of interests. Books represent interests extending beyond the day to day life. All of these things imply that people have time for activities other than toiling from sun-up to sun-down. Non-essential items such as musical instruments and surveying instruments also imply that the owner understanding basic principles of nature and can use these instruments to measure, segment, and order these natural phenomena (Leone 1988).

The meaning one can glean from inventories by looking at the types of tools the decedent has or the goods that may be stored often provide the only clues for discerning what sort of lifestyle the household maintained or how the person earned a living (Main 1975:92).

## Social Ceremony

Tea first became available in England during the third quarter of the seventeenth century. It was, however, not consumed regularly until the second quarter of the eighteenth century (Braudel 1979a:251). Tea "was a mid-day beverage and was a way for the upper class to signal the other strata of society that they were capable of taking time off from their regular activities of the day to socialize, thus segment their day" (Shackel 1987:203). The material goods that one can look for to identify this change in lifestyle include tea pots, canisters, spoons, strainers, and tongs. Items such as sets of chairs also indicate that people are entertaining guests and engaging in social ceremony not seen in the earliest period of settlement in the new world. Matched sets of chairs and elaborate table settings are all part of this changing material world.

## *The Material World of the Chesapeake*

Probate inventory studies that cover the period before 1700 show remarkably little innovation or change in the material world of the Chesapeake society. In the period 1650-1700, St. Mary's County inventories show virtually no goods which might be considered to be non-essential. Only the very highest wealth groups had fine ceramics or watches, and even then only a small percentage of this group possessed these luxuries (Horn 1991). Throughout the period before the turn of the eighteenth century, wealth holding patterns showed little variation. Life in the Chesapeake during the seventeenth century was a meager existence. In the transition from a yeoman to a Georgian mindset, "one of the biggest changes emigrants from England had to face in the new world was...a

much lower standard of living" (Horn 1991:328). Goods not essential to everyday life were very rare. Some people had a few books, but chamberpots, lighting utensils, warming pans and other comforts were scarce. In most of the colonial settlements in America, standards were not simply modest compared to England, they were different. Furniture was quite rare in the Chesapeake. Horn notes that "Virtually all householders at this level were without bedsteads, and only two-thirds even owned a proper mattress." Barrels, pails, and chests were probably used for seating and cooking equipment was normally limited to a pot or two. One difference between the Chesapeake and England as far as material goods are concerned is the extreme poverty experienced by Chesapeake planters in the seventeenth century (Horn 1991:327). Life was "remarkably, almost unimaginably primitive...[and] Equipment of any kind was so scarce that we must look to aboriginal cultures to find modern analogies that even approximate these pre-consumer living conditions of the seventeenth century" (Carson and Carson 1976:17).

During the first quarter of the eighteenth century, changes began to take place in the households of the elite. While during the seventeenth century the wealthy simply had *more* of the same types of objects that the poor had, the early-eighteenth century saw diversity and elaboration in material goods (Carr and Walsh n.d.:7). Around 1716, Carr and Walsh note a sudden rise in the number of material goods present in probate inventories. This finding was arrived at through an "amenities index" calculated by adding together the number of specific items in inventories at a given time. For the first time around 1716 the amenities index increased without being followed by a

corresponding decrease. At this point, tea wares are first seen in the homes of the colonial elite. Fine ceramics, glassware, and musical instruments are also found in increasing numbers. By the mid-eighteenth century, the consumer revolution had reached all socio-economic groups to some degree. As Carr and Walsh note, "By the 1760s...notions of comfort and ways of using objects to advertise status appeared not only in wealthy but in middling households, and even the poor were participating to some degree" (n.d.:7). From this point on, there was a gradual increase until the 1770s (Carr and Walsh 1980). It is these changes in the material wealth of consumers in Britain and the colonies that has been linked to significant changes in worldview, and what can be quantified through the use of probate inventories.

#### Background of Data Used in Comparison

Lois Green Carr and Lorena Walsh have looked at inventories from four different counties in Virginia and Maryland. The areas represented are St. Mary's, Somerset, and Anne Arundel Counties in Maryland, and York County in Virginia. Over 7590 inventories were collected as part of an extensive study of the economic and social development of the Chesapeake region. A number of other aspects of colonial life were explored, including demographic and occupational change. A portion of these documents provide data regarding urban areas of York county that are part of Williamsburg, a British colonial capital from 1699 until the Revolution. The findings of these wealth-distribution and material culture related studies provide an excellent comparative model for Bermuda. The York County information, in particular, is of use because of the urban

Williamsburg data which is directly comparable to the town of St. George's in Bermuda.

Paul Shackel's analysis of records from Annapolis also provided a great deal of the comparative data used in this thesis (Shackel 1987; 1993). Most of this material was taken from Shackel's doctoral dissertation which looks primarily for the presence of items related to segmentation and specialization in furniture and dining as well as items associated with personal hygiene. He uses this information to examine the development of personal discipline and social order during the eighteenth century. Shackel compares inventories from urban Annapolis to rural Anne Arundel County between 1688 and 1820 in order to document the relative increase in specific types of goods and the ability of material goods to create and reinforce group boundaries. He attributes these changes to shifts in social hierarchy and the struggle to maintain one's social position and to reinforce these social boundaries.

The goals of Shackel's dissertation are threefold. First, artifacts that are used to segment time and land should be visible just prior to social stress. That is, surveying tools and clocks would be owned by "a select few...to facilitate the task of the division and measurement of land, time, and environment" (Shackel 1987:32). Second, during these times of crisis, disciplining and segmenting items should be visible. These separate people from one another and separate wealth groups from one another.

The historical background of the Chesapeake is relatively well documented.

Bermuda, as stated earlier, has been largely neglected. In order to compare probate inventories from the two locations it is necessary to summarize the historical background of the island and particularly the town of St. George's.



### CHAPTER III

#### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF BERMUDA, 1609 TO 1799

##### *Early History*

Although charted long before the beginning of the seventeenth century, Bermuda was not settled until shortly after the wreck of the Jamestown bound *Sea Venture* in 1609 (LeFroy 1981:xxxiv) (Figure 1). The timbers of the wrecked ship were salvaged, and while new vessels were being constructed, the island was explored and its potential as a colony was recognized (Jarvis 1994:2). Initially, the English saw Bermuda as a valuable cache of exotic resources there for the taking, just as they had in the Virginia colony. The possibility of using the island as a location to grow cash crops including tobacco was explored almost immediately. Many varieties of seeds were planted to test their efficacy. Tobacco was first planted in 1614, with citrus trees, spices, and sugar cane being planted the following year (Jarvis 1994:2). While experiments with other crops failed, tobacco grew and became the focus of the economy for the next fifty years.

Britain recognized the strategic importance of Bermuda as well. The military threat from countries such as Spain provided an added incentive for permanent

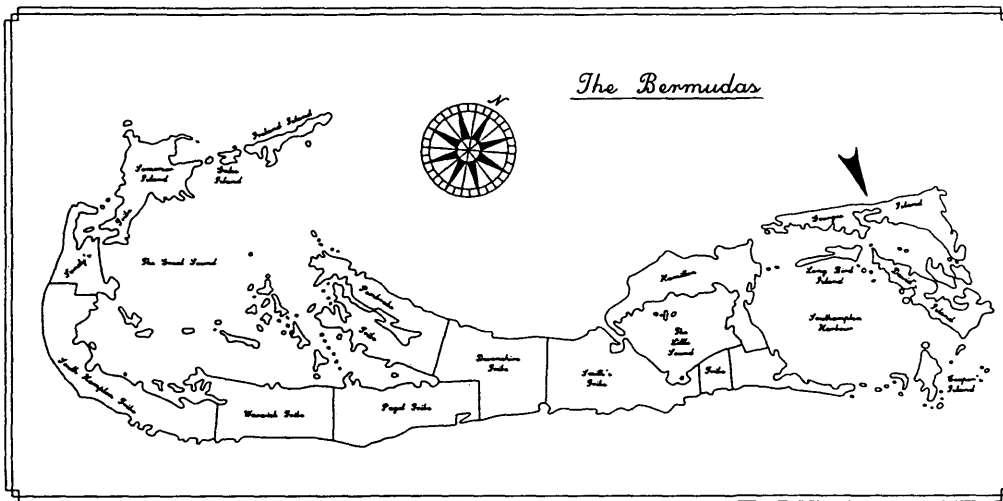


Figure 1. Map of Bermuda Showing Location of St. George's.

settlement of the island, as its central location in the Atlantic made it a desirable stronghold and provided a stopover between England and the newly founded settlements along the North American shore. Historical geographer D. W. Meinig has argued that "Permanent footholds gave rise to more regularized Atlantic traffic, and the English began to develop a North Atlantic trade circuit that in some degree bound together the West Indies, Virginia, New England, and Newfoundland with Bermuda as a new alternative way station" (1986:61-62).

At first, Bermuda was included under the charter of the Virginia Company. The island, however, was not formally surveyed until after the Bermuda Company was chartered separately in 1615. Between 1616 and 1617, Richard Norwood divided the island into eight "tribes" named after the principle investors of the company. Each of the tribes consisted of 1250 acres and the principal investors each received 250 acres. Smaller investors received amounts of land commensurate with their contribution. In addition to the eight tribes, 2000 acres at the eastern end of the island group was set aside for the capital of St. George's. St. George's was held as "general land" to be used for the benefit of the company. The inlet on this end of the island was relatively deep and measured two miles in width, making it the most accessible harbor in the islands, save for the treacherous reef which circled all of the island group.

The land comprising St. George's Parish was held by the Bermuda Company until 1684 when the Company was dissolved. During the Company period, St. George's

represented the only town in the colony, yet it consisted of little more than several dozen wood and plaster cottages (Wilkinson 1950:322). The Company encouraged settlers to plant tobacco while it financed its operation by planting staple crops in St. George's. These staple crops brought dividends from the beginning. Recent research has shown that significant profits were made selling this produce to Caribbean islands and the newly settled areas along the eastern seaboard of North America (Jarvis 1994). This early provisioning activity appears to have been quite profitable until agriculture became firmly established in the mainland colonies.

### *Economic Transition*

While the economic base of Bermuda was initially tied to tobacco monoculture, it quickly became apparent that this focus was not economically viable. Despite this, the Bermuda Company persisted in planting tobacco for several decades. Tobacco in Bermuda was grown primarily in plots of 25-100 acres that were for the most part individually owned and worked by slaves or tenants (Packwood 1975:20-26,50-52; Jarvis 1992:44). Tobacco declined in the second half of the seventeenth century and cultivation at any significant scale was abandoned by the 1670's (Greene 1988:122), as the population of Bermuda quickly exceeded the amount of land available to successfully sustain an economy based primarily on agriculture. The economic base continued to shift during the second half of the seventeenth century, forcing a reliance on foodstuffs produced elsewhere in colonial America (Jarvis 1994:8).

As a result of declining agricultural prosperity, Bermudians turned to shipbuilding and the carrying trade, becoming able mariners. Initially, Bermuda Company officials in London blocked the switch to maritime pursuits. Throughout the Company period, decisions regarding the economic direction of Bermuda were made in England and implemented by the governor and his council. A ban was placed on shipbuilding as early as 1663 in an effort to prevent islanders from trading with other colonies. Likewise, only Company sanctioned ships were allowed to do business in the colony, thereby restricting trade to England alone (Jarvis 1992).

The transition to a maritime economy was not complete until after the Bermuda Company charter was revoked and the island was made a royal colony in 1684. No longer were Bermudians subject to administrative approval from London in provisioning islands in the Caribbean or engaging in trade along the east coast of North America. Trade increased and by the turn of the eighteenth century, the island developed into an important center of trade in the Atlantic. As a result, St. George's became a flourishing commercial center (Jarvis 1992:16). The development of the ship building industry contributed significantly to the growing maritime economy. The development of the Bermuda sloop some time near the turn of the eighteenth century signaled the primacy of seafaring to the economy. The new reliance on the sea reduced agriculture to a small scale pursuit, primarily for home use and limited export to the West Indies (Jarvis 1992:45). After 1700, pastures and agricultural fields were increasingly being replanted with cedars to produce more wood for the construction of ships. This in turn made

Bermuda increasingly more reliant on the Chesapeake and other locations for meat and grain. As ship building and maritime trade became the mainstay of the economy, the price of cedar rose. While the Bermudians appear to have built primarily frame structures during the seventeenth century, higher prices and the diminishing stock of cedar prompted a shift to native limestone for constructing buildings by the turn of the century.

Bermuda's strong economy was short-lived, however. The heady days of plenty were over by 1730. By this time, the focus of trade concentrated on a string of emerging commercial centers along the east coast of North America. The economies of the American colonies had developed to a point where they were now self sufficient, producing far more than England could actually use. Trade routes shifted in response to the increased economic activity along the east coast of North America and the transfer of the tobacco trade from London to more northerly ports in Great Britain (Steele 1986; Brown 1994)(Figure 2). The new trade circuit bypassed Bermuda for the most part. Where Bermuda had once supplied the colonies in America and the West Indies with food and resources, now the American colonies produced enough food and materials to meet the needs of England and the West Indies, as well as a sizeable surplus which England sold to the Spanish, the French and the Dutch (Middleton 1992:200-204). Increasing tobacco prices and lower prices for manufactured goods from the continent made for a combination that allowed the mainland colonies to flourish, and as the economic success of the North American colonies continued to overshadow Bermuda as

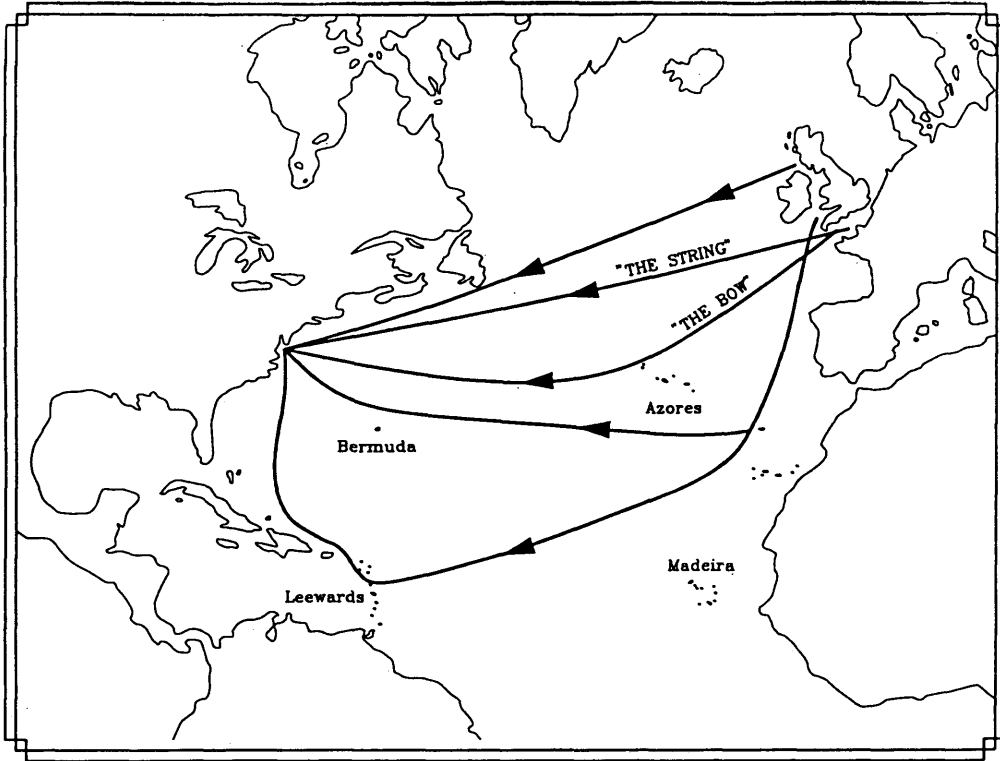


Figure 2. Atlantic Trade Routes in the Eighteenth Century  
After Steele (1986) and Brown (1994).

the eighteenth century wore on, Bermudians continued to take their living from the sea. Known throughout the Empire for their ability as shipwrights and sailors, they continued to build the Bermuda sloop, ship goods far and wide, expertly negotiate dangerous waters to salvage wrecked ships, and engage in privateering.

### *The Growing Population*

Bermuda got its start as a proprietary colony organized on the example of the Virginia Company. The shareholders in the Bermuda Company were eager to boost the population of the colony, which would result in greater earnings. Initially, shareholders recruited settlers for their landholdings in Bermuda. It became clear early on, however, that the small island was quickly becoming over-populated. By the mid-seventeenth century, the Bermuda colony had been "encreased and multiplied to a great people insomuch that now here is no livings for us" (Lefroy 1981, Vol.II:30). Even though immigration decreased towards mid-century, the population continued to grow. Bermuda enjoyed healthy living conditions and a more equally balanced male-female ratio which promoted natural increase. The 1670s, for example, witnessed the birth of over one hundred children while less than fifty deaths were recorded (Wells 1975:174). Population pressure was alleviated to some degree by out-migration from the island and re-settlement in other areas of the Caribbean and colonial America yet the population of Bermuda almost doubled between the years 1698 and 1774, increasing the population from 5,862 to 11,155 and reducing the amount of land per person to 1.09 acres (Greene 1988:153). These figures are deceptive, however, as most of the growth occurred early



in the eighteenth century and during a brief period at mid-century. There was a sharp increase in the population towards the end of the seventeenth century when the Bermuda Company was dissolved. The pattern of increase continued into the 1720s, raising the total population from 6000 to 10,000 (Wells 1975:174). The population jumped to almost 12,000 in the 1750s and 1760s before declining to less than 11,000 by the end of the century (Wells 1975:172-181). St. George's was the only urban center in Bermuda during the eighteenth century and it is likely that its population reflects the same general trend observed throughout the island.

Scholars have observed interesting trends in Bermuda's female and black populations, as well. Throughout the eighteenth century, of the island exhibited a consistent female majority (Greene 1988:154). In 1699, for example, the St. George's population included 341 females and only 277 males (Wells 1975). This pattern probably reflects the absence of men at sea as well as outmigration which would have been dominated by men leaving the colony to look for greater opportunities elsewhere.

Bermuda's black population exhibited the same general trends as their white counterparts. Early on, the Bermuda Company decided to limit the black population to ten slaves per white man. The first slaves in Bermuda worked in agricultural fields. As land became increasingly scarce, the need for field slaves diminished (Greene 1988:153). The role of slaves in Bermuda adapted to shifts within the economy. By the end of the seventeenth century, many possessed specialized skills and were heavily involved in

maritime trade, making their situation significantly different from that of their counterparts in the Chesapeake. The small plots on which tobacco was grown in Bermuda precluded "gang slave labor and the brutality that went with it" (Packwood 1975:17-19). While the vagaries of slavery are indisputable, it has been assumed that slaves in Bermuda were at least in some ways better off than those in the Chesapeake (see Bellhorn 1992).

### *St. George's*

As the capital of Bermuda, the town of St. George's appears to have reflected the economic well-being of the island as a whole. It was the capital and only true "town" in Bermuda from the beginning of the colony until 1815 when the seat of power was moved to the newly established and more centrally located town of Hamilton. After the dissolution of the company in 1684, new efforts were put towards building more structures in St. George's. In order to attract residents, it became necessary to grant more permanent land holding rights to town residents than had been allowed under company rule. For this reason, the symbolic rent of a single peppercorn per year was charged. Still, improvements to the town were slow, and by 1703 only a few lots had been taken. As an impetus to development, lawmakers added a proviso requiring that the construction of a stone house on the property within two years of the lease under penalty of forfeiture (Wilkinson 1950:323-324)(Figure 3). It appears that, initially, this stipulation provided a needed catalyst for the rapid growth of the town. Several of the wealthier and more optimistic inhabitants took two or three lots. Bridges leading to St.

George's were widened, and storehouses were built by enterprising townsmen as well as people from other parishes (Figure 4).

The economic development of the first years of the eighteenth century seemed to indicate that the town of St. George's was destined to become a booming commercial center. New buildings were built in anticipation of success, and the future of seafaring seemed promising. As the focus of the Bermudian economy shifted from agriculture to the sea, islanders became widely involved as carriers of cargo in the developing Atlantic system (Meinig 1986:161). This led to growth and visions of grandeur. Prosperity was short-lived, however, as native resources became increasingly limited and trade circuits became more centered on the American colonies and led to the gradual exclusion of Bermuda. The severity of the situation became apparent early on. A popular rhyme recorded in 1709 reflects the reality of the situation:

"The St. George's people are so poor,  
They see you coming and slam the door" (Wilkinson  
1950:326).

The period after 1750 proved to be equally, if not more disappointing and regressive. St. George's reflected this decline as "there was a lag in construction, and those houses which might have set the fashion were let to long-term tenants, with the result that by 1750 there was only an agglomeration of rather fewer than a hundred stone houses. They had been erected for the most part with little forethought on odd, irregular, little plots and at different levels" (Wilkinson 1950:324).

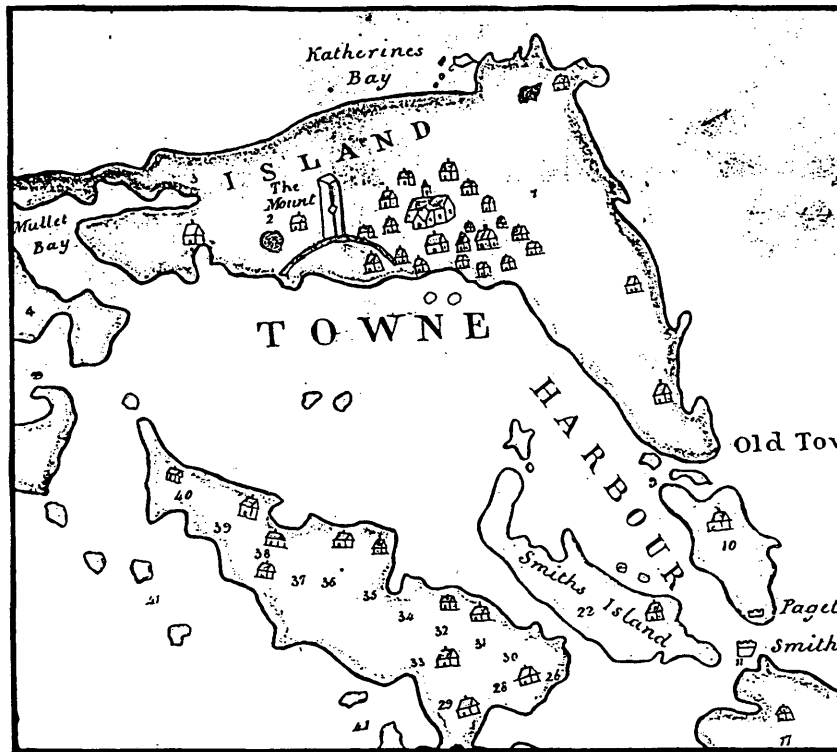


Figure 3. Detail Map of Bermuda Showing St. George's, 1739.  
(Richard Norwood).

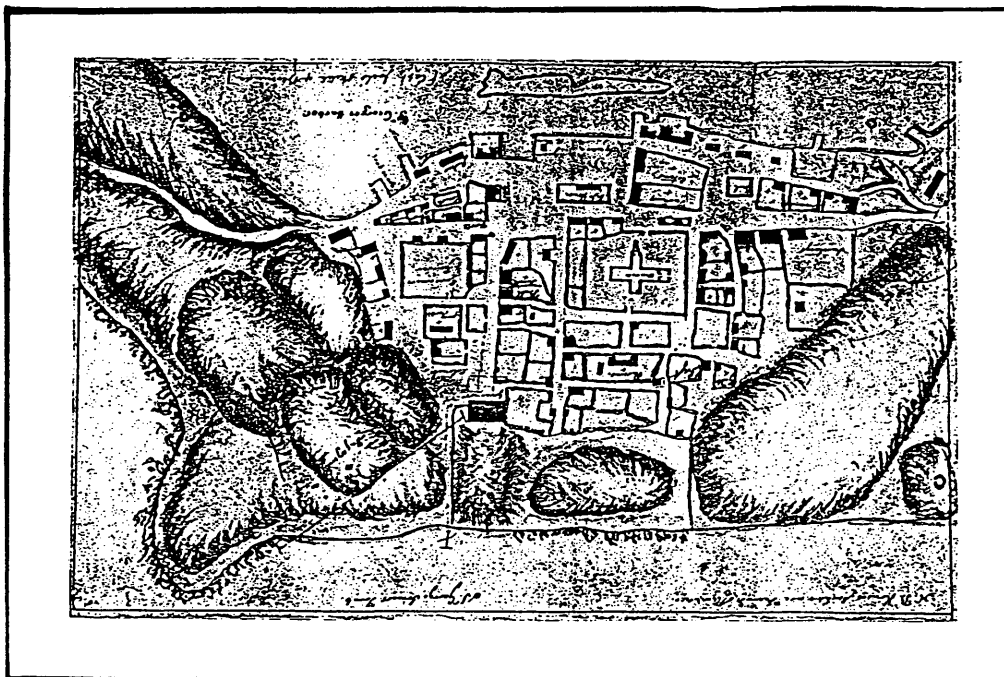


Figure 4. Drawing of St. George's, 1780.  
(Captain Joell, in Wilkinson 1950:324)

For much of the eighteenth century, St. George's officials fought to keep the town a commercial center. A succession of governors and concerned townspeople tried repeatedly to revitalize the town, yet very little was accomplished by either group. In the 1760s, Governor William Pople initiated a plan to revitalize the town, counteracting the trend whereby it had "become most inconsiderable with respect to the wealth and number of inhabitants of any part of these islands" (Wilkinson 1950:325-326). The governor sold public land in St. George's in order to attract business, development, and wealth. His plan did little to improve his countrymen's opinion of St. George's. Popples' successor continued the effort to firmly establish the town as the true center of trade by selling even more of the public land (Wilkinson 1950:326). His attempt, like those before and the many which would follow, met with little success.

St. George's position as the seat of the colony was questioned repeatedly during the second half of the eighteenth century. Detractors argued that the harbor was dangerous and that the town's location on an island at the eastern end of the island group was inconvenient (Wilkinson 1950:326). Just as the rhyme penned in 1709 reflected the poverty of the town early in the eighteenth century, Nathaniel Tucker voiced the continued frustration with St. George's at the century's end:

In this poor town there's nothing done,  
There's neither merriment nor fun,  
There's nothing clever, nothing new,  
The same dull scene recurs to view

(Nathaniel Tucker (circa 1783; in Wilkinson 1973:65).

*Bermuda Within the Larger System*

Despite the fact that Bermuda was a part of the larger British colonial system, the island was atypical in many respects. In many cases, the island's economic development ran counter to the evolution of the American colonial economies. In short, it has been argued that Bermuda reached socio-economic stasis very early in the eighteenth century. The reason for this, suggested by Jack Greene in *Pursuits of Happiness* (Greene 1988), is that despite numerous attempts at establishing an agriculturally based economy there was no substantial cash crop, such as tobacco, grown in Bermuda during the eighteenth century. For this reason, the argument continues, only a few Bermudians were able to amass considerable fortunes, unlike their kinsmen in the Chesapeake. Based upon this assumption, it has furthermore been assumed that the increase in material goods and the "consumer revolution" that is seen in data from the Chesapeake, bypassed Bermuda because of declining economic opportunities. This study, then, examines the material world of Bermudians in St. George's in light of developments in the mainland tobacco economy which contributed to changes in the mindset, culminating in the development of a Georgian worldview throughout the American colonies.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**DISCUSSION OF PROBATE INVENTORIES FROM**  
**ST. GEORGE'S, BERMUDA, 1700-1799.**

*Methodology*

This analysis of probate inventories compares wealth holding patterns in St. George's, Bermuda to two locations in the Chesapeake (Annapolis, Maryland and Williamsburg, Virginia). A total of 74 probate inventories from St. George's Parish, Bermuda, were identified in the Bermuda Archives for the period 1700-1799. Although this is a relatively small number of inventories, it is felt that a reasonable cross-section of society was present to provide comparative data. It is important to note that part of the process included the transcription of most of the inventories used for this research. All the inventories that were identified in the Bermuda archives dating to the eighteenth century from St. George's were included if they appeared to be complete, were legible, and listed the total value of the estate. As St. George's represents the only urban area in Bermuda during the eighteenth century, it is the most logical parish to be used for comparison to the colonial capitals of Williamsburg and Annapolis. Data from previously conducted studies were used, and similar methodologies were employed.



Most studies of probate inventories require the determination of the value of the pound sterling as well as the rate of inflation. These have yet to be calculated for Bermuda, but for the purposes of this comparison, the total value of estates in probate inventories should not be significantly different in Bermuda than along the eastern seaboard of the American colonies because they were so closely interrelated during the eighteenth century. Furthermore, it is the **increase** in material goods that is at issue, not the relative value of specific goods, nor the value of these goods over time. Inventories were simply checked for the presence or absence of items without regard to their value, although it is recognized that this would prove valuable and interesting for other types of analysis in the future.

#### Differences in Data

Carr and Walsh have looked primarily for categories of material goods and have calculated "Amenities Indices" and "Modern Indices" for inventories based on the number of categories present in each inventory (Carr and Walsh 1980; n.d.). In their data presentation, they provide charts showing the percentage of households in which certain classes of goods were present. Shackel identifies the presence of particular objects in inventories and compares urban and rural groups over time. Each of the studies looks at different objects, with very few overlapping categories of material goods. For example, while Shackel looks for the presence of sets of forks, Carr and Walsh look for combined sets of forks and knives, making an overall comparison of the three locations impossible. Because of the differences in the data presentation used for

Williamsburg and for Annapolis, different material goods were used to compare each of the Chesapeake areas to Bermuda. This was done because Shackel's and Carr and Walsh's data were compiled in separate ways. The use of multiple forms of material culture provides different types of information, and this may actually be a more enlightening method of analysis in these beginning stages of research in Bermuda.

Wealth groups were also divided in different ways in each of the Chesapeake studies. Carr and Walsh divide the sample into a total of five groups and Shackel uses only four. Because the Bermuda data was divided in these two different ways as well, the use of different comparative methods is seen as potentially more sensitive to variation in material culture between wealth groups.

### Categories

The initial analysis of the Bermuda inventories involved determining whether categories similar to those used to analyze the Chesapeake data would be applicable to inventories from Bermuda. That is, a number of studies of the Chesapeake have looked at things such as the number of chairs compared to the number of trunks to determine how formalized seating may have been at a certain time, under the assumption that those who had more chairs were not only more able to afford but also saw the value of specialized, segmented pieces of furniture. Silverplate or looking glasses are also looked for in several of the Chesapeake studies as these items are always expensive, non-essential and meant solely for adornment. Using categories of this type to compare

Bermuda to the Chesapeake proved impossible however, as the Bermuda inventories showed a very different pattern. Even a cursory glance at a sample of inventories from over the course of the century showed that early in the eighteenth century almost everyone had sets of a half dozen or a dozen matching chairs and most had other non-essential items such as silver and tea tables. Later in the century Bermuda inventories showed a lack of diversity, a pattern very different than in the Chesapeake. For this reason, individual categories were chosen instead of groups of items. At these early stages of research in Bermuda it appeared to be more useful to sample the data instead of comparing broader groups of material goods.

### *Williamsburg*

For comparison of the Bermuda data to the Williamsburg (urban York County) data, selected categories of material goods were chosen and inventories were checked for presence or absence based on the methodology employed by Carr and Walsh (n.d.). These consist of (1) Earthenware, (2) Spices, (3) Forks, (4) Fine China, (5) Knives, (6) Bed/Table Linen, (7) Plate, and (8) Items associated with tea consumption. Carr and Walsh explain that these are items that represent the increasing desire for finery and non-essential goods. They see the rising cost of tobacco and the dropping cost of consumer goods as the principle catalyst for these transitions. The degree of infiltration of these consumer goods can be shown over time using these categories.

Inventories were divided into the same wealth groups initially used by Carr and

Walsh (n.d.) to facilitate comparison. These consist of five groups: estates valued at less than £49, those between £50-95, £96-225, £226-490, and those greater than £491. As Carr and Walsh point out, the wealth groups including the estates ranging from £50-225 account for the segment of the society with the median amount of income until circa 1730 in the Chesapeake. The next division, £226-490, is representative of the group that experienced a sharp increase in material goods during the eighteenth century (n.d.:11). They further note that in their analysis they have identified these shifts in material goods throughout the four county region and have noted increases in the "amenities" in all wealth groups by the end of the century (n.d.:11).

Carr and Walsh divide their sample into periods of approximately ten years, with the exception of the first period, which is significantly shorter. These dates are 1700-1703, 1710-1722, 1723-1732, 1733-1744, 1745-1754, 1755-1767, 1768-1777. For certain time periods there is very little information in the Bermuda records and when a division of inventories into periods of ten years was attempted there was not enough data for some of the divisions. In the 1730s, for example, very few inventories made their way into the documentary record. For this reason, the data from the eighteenth century were divided into periods of 33 years: 1700-1733, 1734-1766, 1767-1799. This provided a fairly even distribution of inventories. Williamsburg data were also divided into approximately the same periods, 1700-1732, 1733-1767, 1768-1777. Unfortunately, the Williamsburg data do not do beyond 1777, yet the Bermuda data were compiled for the years extending to 1799. This is also not considered detrimental to the comparison,

as the analyses of Williamsburg have shown that most significant changes regarding shifts in wealth-holding patterns and changes in material goods have already taken place by the time of the American Revolution.

### First Third of the Eighteenth Century

During the first period (Figure 5), 1700-1733, the Bermuda data clearly shows an even distribution of high status goods in the inventories of the lowest wealth groups. In the Chesapeake, only the elite began to acquire "a greater array of material goods that facilitated a style of living that more clearly set them off from the ordinary folk" (Walsh 1983:110). Compared to the Chesapeake colonists (Figure 6), it becomes apparent that Bermudians experienced not only a greater degree of wealth during the early-eighteenth century but also that the increase in material goods that is seen in the Chesapeake data from the mid-eighteenth century occurs in Bermuda approximately a quarter century earlier. During this earliest period, even the estates summing less than £0-49 have almost the same items as the higher wealth groups. In the Williamsburg data, wealth appears to be concentrated in the upper wealth groups while in St. George's there appears to be an overall more equal distribution of material goods.

The £0-49 wealth group in Bermuda has the same items as the higher wealth groups with the exception of forks and knives. Spices, fine linens, and plates are found in all inventories. The only wealth group to own fine china is the highest group, with estates summing £491 or more. From the chart, it is also clear that of the inventories

## Incidence of Selected Consumer Items: 1700-1733

St. George's, Bermuda

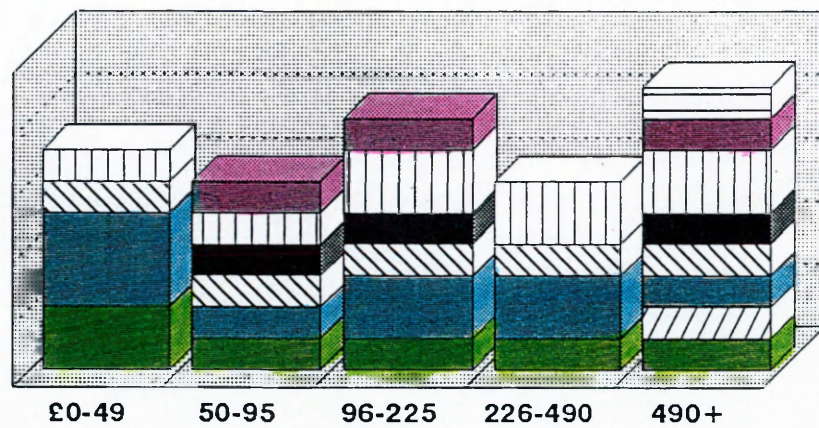


Figure 5. Incidence of Selected Consumer Items, St. George's, Bermuda  
1700-1733

## Incidence of Selected Consumer Items: 1700-1732

York County, Virginia - Urban

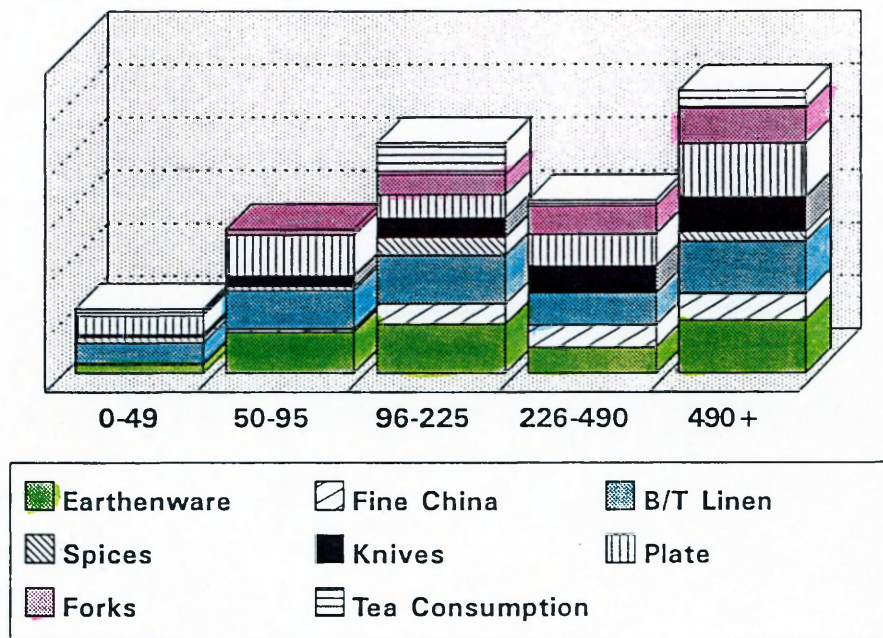


Figure 6. Incidence of Selected Consumer Items, York County (Williamsburg) 1700-1732.

(After Carr and Walsh, n.d.)

making up the sample, the distribution of wealth is fairly even, and those with a higher degree of wealth do not necessarily have different items. This pattern is similar to what is seen in the Chesapeake during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, with the exception that the overall fine quality of goods in Bermuda seems to be a distinguishing factor.

Several strata of Williamsburg households during this early period had items related to tea consumption, while only the elite in Bermuda have tea-related goods. In fact, the earliest inventory including such things dates to 1728, when the estate of Thomas Maydman includes a tea pot, a tea pot dish, 2 tongs, 2 kettles, 2 scummers, and 12 teaspoons (Book of Wills Volume 6). Based upon other items in his inventory, it is likely that he is a merchant, thus explaining the large number of items and possibly marking the introduction of these items into Bermuda. Spices are found in inventories from St. George's with some frequency, and in York County they are less likely to be found.

### Second Third of the Eighteenth Century

During the second third of the eighteenth century differences can be seen between wealth groups and the types of goods included in the Bermuda inventories (Figure 7). For example, the first two wealth groups, £0-49 and £50-95, have noticeably less variety in material culture than the upper wealth groups. Also, most of the population is in the



median wealth groups. The £0-49 wealth group had no occurrences of spice, forks, or knives. All other wealth groups had spices, and most had some articles associated with tea consumption. The elite (£491+) had all types of goods with the exception of earthenware. In Williamsburg (Figure 8) the wealth groups ranging from £0-49 have a much higher occurrence of the selected consumer items than St. George's residents in the same wealth group. In fact, the lower wealth groups in Williamsburg have the same types of goods as the upper wealth groups but as one would expect, with less frequency. In stark contrast, St. George's residents have only five of the eight selected items. The biggest change in this period is regarding the distribution of wealth. Again, the small size of the sample may have influenced the figures to a degree, but if all 6 inventories available for this time period are seen as a cross section of society, the distribution of wealth has shifted to the wealth groups with estates totalling £96-225 and £226-490. There are less inventories from elite groups and less for wealth groups with estates of less than £96. In the Chesapeake around the middle of the eighteenth century, households in all wealth groups became more able and more willing to purchase a number of non-essential consumer goods that had previously been either unavailable or unnecessary to purchase (Walsh 1983:109).

#### Last Third of the Eighteenth Century

The last period, 1767 to 1799 (Figure 9), is the first to include a number of St. George's inventories, particularly those from the lower wealth groups, that do not have many of the items that characterize wealth. For the first time, several inventories in the

## Incidence of Selected Consumer Items: 1734-1766

St. George's, Bermuda

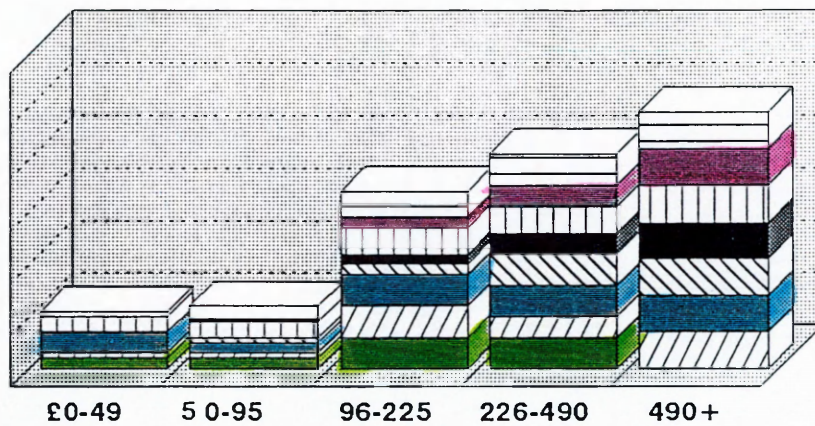


Figure 7. Incidence of Selected Consumer Items, St. George's, Bermuda 1734-1766

## Incidence of Selected Consumer Items: 1733-1767

York County, Virginia - Urban

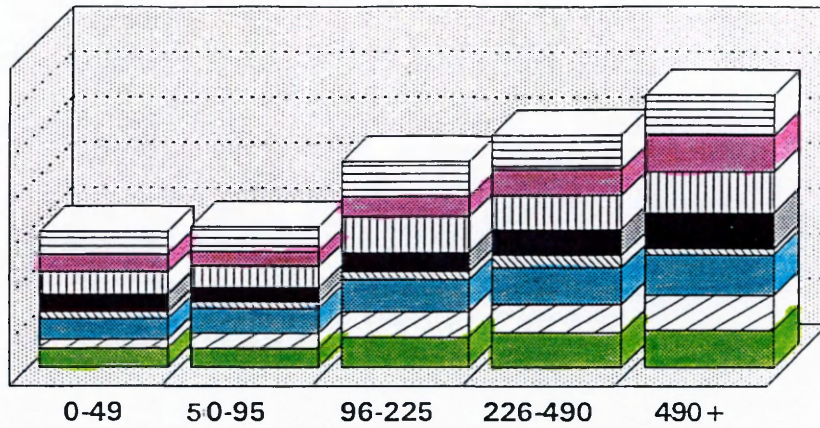


Figure 8. Incidence of Selected Consumer Items, York County (Williamsburg) 1733-1767

(After Carr and Walsh n.d.)

sample itemize little more than a pot, a spoon, and a bed. Only the elite, with estates totalling over £491, have most of the goods that are considered luxury items. All inventories except those of the very poor include knives, yet forks are only represented only in the three highest groups. Spices have also become a luxury item during this time, and while the presence of spices was noted in one estate valued at £50-95, the only significant occurrence of spices is noted in the wealth groups with estates totalling £226 or more. In St. George's, the poor have the same number of items that they had in the second third of the eighteenth century, with no increase except in the occurrence of tea-related goods, in which there is an increase in all wealth groups.

In Williamsburg (Figure 10) the last third of the eighteenth century shows wealth is becoming more concentrated in the upper wealth groups. While spices are no longer present in the lowest wealth group, tea related items are present in most of the inventories in all wealth groups. Williamsburg also exhibits greater diversity in material goods during this period, and even in the poorest wealth group some of the inventories have almost all the selected items.

### **Summary of Bermuda-Williamsburg Comparison**

St. George's inventories are significantly more diverse early in the eighteenth century than they are at the end of the century. The distribution of goods among the wealth groups is also remarkably even in the early period in St. George's and shows

## Incidence of Selected Consumer Items: 1767-1799

St. George's, Bermuda

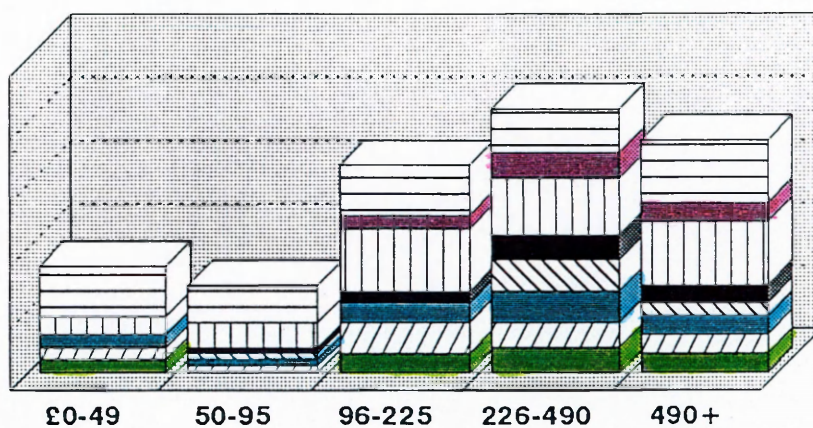


Figure 9. Incidence of Selected Consumer Items, St. George's, Bermuda.  
1767-1799

# Incidence of Selected Consumer Items: 1768-1777

York County, Virginia - Urban

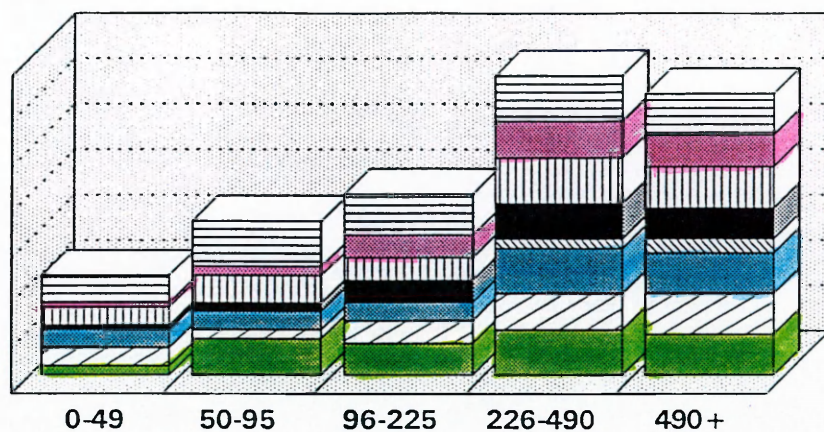


Figure 10. Incidence of Selected Consumer Items, York County (Williamsburg) 1768-1777  
(After Carr and Walsh n.d.)

more inequality later in the century. The distribution of wealth in St. George's shifts from being fairly even to being concentrated in the upper groups between the first and the second thirds of the century, while in Williamsburg, during the same period of time, the poor actually appear to have been able to improve their lot. By the last third of the eighteenth century, wealth in Virginia is more concentrated in the upper wealth groups, yet with the exception of certain goods such as spices becoming more rare in the low and middling wealth groups, diversity continues to be seen in the Chesapeake.

### *Annapolis*

Paul Shackel's Ph.D dissertation (1987) provided the comparative data from Annapolis for this thesis. His data was compiled from probate inventories from Anne Arundel County and Annapolis during the period 1688-1820. Only the urban data was used for comparison to Bermuda, and no data from after the turn of the nineteenth century were used. Information on the presence of various types of goods found in Annapolis probate inventories was used. Shackel used individual artifacts such as tea tables as well as groups of artifacts such as sets of knives and forks. Again, the items used in this analysis for were for the most part non-essential items that are recognized as fineries or indulgences to make life more comfortable or to display wealth and fashion. A total of five categories of material goods found in Bermuda inventories were compared to those in Annapolis. These are (1) napkins, (2) sets of cups and saucers, (3) tea tables, (4) clocks, and (5) sets of forks.

Shackel used the slightly different divisions for wealth groups than Carr and Walsh (n.d.). These were £0-49, £50-225, £226-490, and £491 and greater. The two middle groups represent the median wealth groups while the higher group consists of the very rich and the lower represents the very poor.

### Napkins

One of the items looked for in the Annapolis data was napkins. The significance of these items is that they are non-essential and suggest a desire not only to dress one's table but also to be presentable in appearance while dining. They are non-essential and since they count as linens, they are relatively costly. In the Annapolis data (Figure 11), napkins are generally only found in higher wealth groups; especially during the early periods. Napkins are only rarely found in households of £49 or less, and even in the estates totalling over £491 they are for the most part seen in less than half of the sample inventories. The Bermuda data, by comparison (Figure 12), shows that even the poorer households have napkins during the first half of the century. In all of the wealthiest households (over £491), napkins were included in the sample inventories for every period during the eighteenth century. The estates summing £226-490 showed napkins present in 50% of the households between 1710 and 1732 and in 100% of the households from 1733-1754, 75% of the households from 1755-1777, and only 50% from 1778-1799. Similarly, estates valued at £50-225 were generally more likely to have napkins during the earlier periods than during the later ones.



# Presence of Napkins

Annapolis, Maryland

| Wealth in Pounds | 1688-1709 | 1710-1732 | 1733-1754 | 1755-1777 | 1778-1799 |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 0-49             | 0         | 8%        | 30%       | 9%        | 0         |
| 50-225           | 0         | 30%       | 50%       | 43%       | 42%       |
| 226-490          | 0         | 75%       | 55%       | 78%       | 89%       |
| 491+             | 0         | 78%       | 27%       | 76%       | 61%       |

After Shackel 1987

Figure 11. Presence of Napkins, Annapolis, Maryland.

### Sets of Cups and Saucers

Another item identified in both the Annapolis and the St. George's data is sets of cups and saucers. The importance of sets of flatware and hollowware in probate inventories is that they indicate that people are eating their meals from individual place settings, often with very specialized utensils and dishes. Cups and saucers represent not only individual forms but are also frequently associated with the consumption of beverages such as tea. In all, sets of cups and saucers are representative of a more Georgian mind-set. In both the Annapolis data and the St. George's data, cups and saucers were counted only when listed together as a set in the inventories.

In Annapolis, (Figure 13) sets of cups and saucers were found in less than 50% of the estates for all of the wealth groups throughout the eighteenth century. Cups and saucers were found with higher frequency in the upper wealth groups. For the elite, the occurrence of cups and saucers decreased slightly at the end of the century, yet for the £226-490 group the trend is increasing. Results from Bermuda (Figure 14) show that sets of cups and saucers were also more common in lower wealth group estates during the early to mid eighteenth century than towards the end of the eighteenth century. In contrast to Annapolis, even the lower wealth groups have a quite high frequency of cups and saucers from 1733 on, yet these figures drop significantly by the end of the eighteenth century.

## Presence of Napkins

St. George's, Bermuda

| Wealth in Pounds | 1700<br>1709 | 1710-<br>1732 | 1733-<br>1754 | 1755-<br>1777 | 1778-<br>1799 |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 0-49             | 75%          |               | 100%          | 0             | 25%           |
| 50-225           | 100%         | 75%           | 20%           | 50%           | 44%           |
| 226-490          |              | 50%           | 100%          | 75%           | 50%           |
| 491+             |              | 100%          |               | 100%          | 100%          |

Figure 12. Presence of Napkins, St. George's, Bermuda.

## Presence of Sets of Cups and Saucers

Annapolis, Maryland

| Wealth<br>in<br>Pounds | 1688-<br>1709 | 1710-<br>1732 | 1733-<br>1754 | 1755-<br>1777 | 1778-<br>1799 |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 0-49                   | 0             | 0             | 0             | 6%            | 0             |
| 50-225                 | 0             | 19%           | 6%            | 13%           | 0             |
| 226-490                | 0             | 33%           | 9%            | 11%           | 44%           |
| 491+                   | 0             | 44%           | 13%           | 24%           | 39%           |

After Shackel 1987

Figure 13. Presence of Cups and Saucers, Annapolis, Maryland.

## Tea Tables

Another item used by Shackel to measure wealth and the relative increase in material goods during the eighteenth century is tea tables. Shackel states that tea tables are part of the "elaborate equipment and ceremony related to tea consumption" (1987:203). In the Annapolis data (Figure 15), the occurrence of tea tables was very low for the lowest wealth group; never going over 9% during the eighteenth century. Furthermore, the higher the wealth group and the later the date, the more likely the occurrence of a tea table in the inventory. Tea tables (Figure 16) were not present in any inventories from St. George's until the period 1733-1754, unlike Annapolis when these are found in inventories from the period 1710-1732. During the later periods, when tea tables become more prevalent in Annapolis, the documents from St. George's show a slight decrease in their number. In inventories that contain a number of small and large tables as well as numerous tea related items such as cups and pots, there frequently were no tea tables. Since the executors did not recognize any of the extant tables as tea tables it is unlikely that such items were recognized in Bermudian society, either because they were not there or because there was not the same idea about segmentation and separation of furniture. In any case, the lack of itemized tea tables in the Bermuda sample indicates that a lesser degree of recognition of these types of material goods is seen in Bermuda than in other colonies during the same time period.

## Presence of Sets of Cups and Saucers

St. George's, Bermuda

| Wealth in<br>Pounds | 1700<br>1709 | 1710-<br>1732 | 1733-<br>1754 | 1755-<br>1777 | 1778-<br>1799 |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 0-49                | 0            |               | 100%          | 66%           | 25%           |
| 50-225              | 0            | 0             | 20%           | 62%           | 27%           |
| 226-490             |              | 0             | 100%          | 75%           | 50%           |
| 491+                |              | 100%          |               | 100%          | 66%           |

Figure 14. Presence of Cups and Saucers, St. George's, Bermuda.

## Presence of Tea Tables

Annapolis, Maryland

| Wealth<br>in<br>Pounds | 1688-<br>1709 | 1710-<br>1732 | 1733-<br>1754 | 1755-<br>1777 | 1778-<br>1799 |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 0-49                   | 0             | 0             | 6%            | 9%            | 0             |
| 50-225                 | 0             | 11%           | 11%           | 40%           | 25%           |
| 226-490                | 0             | 8%            | 18%           | 11%           | 33%           |
| 491+                   | 0             | 11%           | 40%           | 12%           | 61%           |

After Shackel 1987

Figure 15. Presence of Tea Tables, Annapolis, Maryland.

## Presence of Tea Tables

St. George's, Bermuda

| Wealth in<br>Pounds | 1700<br>1709 | 1710-<br>1732 | 1733-<br>1754 | 1755-<br>1777 | 1778-<br>1799 |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 0-49                | 0            |               | 0             | 33%           | 25%           |
| 50-225              | 0            | 0             | 0             | 25%           | 9%            |
| 226-490             |              | 0             | 75%           | 50%           | 50%           |
| 491+                |              | 0             |               | 0             | 75%           |

Figure 16. Presence of Tea Tables, St. George's, Bermuda.



## Sets of Forks

Table forks are not mentioned in English inventories prior to 1660 and are not common until the middle of the eighteenth century (Braudel 1979:206). While the general purpose of a spoon is the consumption of liquid or semi-liquid food and the purpose of a knife is to cut larger pieces of food for consumption or for food preparation, the sole purpose of the fork is to secure food, thereby eliminating the need to touch the food. Because of the late arrival date of the fork onto the market and the specialized nature of the utensil, it is also a measure of how "fashionable" or "modern" a person has become. "Specialized items began to segment the dinner and the people from each other" (Shackel 1987:106). An additional measure of how accessible the latest material goods are or to what degree a household has assimilated to the world market is the presence of sets of items such as forks, as they are part of the complete and elaborate table settings that are first seen in the eighteenth century.

In Annapolis (Figure 17), especially during the third quarter of the eighteenth century, the two upper wealth groups were quite likely to have sets of forks. Throughout the eighteenth century, however, the possibility of a wealthy estate including sets of forks was less than 50%. The Bermuda inventories (Figure 18) showed a much higher occurrence of sets of forks for all wealth groups during the first half of the eighteenth century. Towards the end of the century, however, the likelihood decreased, especially for the £50-225 wealth group.

## Clocks and Watches

Clocks represent time-order and suggest that the owner has a need to organize time and responsibilities beyond a sunrise to sunset workday (Figure 19). Leone (1988) suggests that they are representative of segmenting the day into hours just as surveying instruments segment land. Clocks are also valuable throughout the eighteenth century and are non-essential. Clocks were found in over 50% of the inventories from Annapolis in the two upper wealth groups after 1710. While the lower wealth groups were not as likely to own clocks during the earlier periods, by mid-century the gap between wealth groups was getting smaller for this item.

In St. George's (Figure 20), both clocks and watches were counted because clocks were so extremely rare. Still, only a very small percentage of households of any wealth group had clocks or watches. As with tea tables, it appears that cultural differences exist in Bermuda that preclude the presence of some types of goods and not others. That is, certain goods may simply not have been recognized in Bermuda for their ability to display wealth or gentility. More importantly, it is apparent that the order associated with Georgian ideals was not as felt as strongly or as deeply manifested in material goods in Bermuda as it was in Annapolis by the end of the eighteenth century.

## Presence of Sets of Forks

Annapolis, Maryland

| Wealth in Pounds | 1688<br>1709 | 1710-<br>1732 | 1733-<br>1754 | 1755-<br>1777 | 1778-<br>1799 |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 0-49             | 0            | 0             | 3%            | 9%            | 0             |
| 50-225           | 0            | 19%           | 33%           | 10%           | 33%           |
| 226-490          | 0            | 25%           | 55%           | 78%           | 44%           |
| 491+             | 0            | 44%           | 13%           | 71%           | 56%           |

After Shackel, 1987

Figure 17. Presence of Sets of Forks, Annapolis, Maryland.

## Presence of Sets of Forks

St. George's, Bermuda

| Wealth<br>in<br>Pounds | 1700<br>1709 | 1710-<br>1732 | 1733-<br>1754 | 1755-<br>1777 | 1778-<br>1799 |
|------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 0-49                   | 0            |               | 0             | 0             | 0             |
| 50-225                 | 100%         | 50%           | 25%           | 36%           | 16%           |
| 226-490                |              | 50%           | 75%           | 25%           | 66%           |
| 491+                   |              | 100%          |               | 100%          | 100%          |

Figure 18. Presence of Sets of Forks, St. George's, Bermuda.

## Presence of Clocks

Annapolis, Maryland

| Wealth in Pounds | 1688-1709 | 1710-1732 | 1733-1754 | 1755-1777 | 1778-1799 |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 0-49             | 0         | 4%        | 9%        | 22%       | 40%       |
| 50-225           | 0         | 26%       | 56%       | 40%       | 33%       |
| 226-490          | 25%       | 58%       | 82%       | 56%       | 56%       |
| 491+             | 0         | 67%       | 67%       | 94%       | 44%       |

After Shackel 1987

Figure 19. Presence of Clocks, Annapolis, Maryland.

## Presence of Clocks/Watches

St. George's, Bermuda

| Wealth in<br>Pounds | 1700<br>1709 | 1710-<br>1732 | 1733-<br>1754 | 1755-<br>1777 | 1778-<br>1799 |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 0-49                | 0            |               | 0             | 0             | 33%           |
| 50-225              | 0            | 0             | 0             | 18%           | 0             |
| 226-490             |              | 0             | 25%           | 0             | 33%           |
| 491+                |              | 0             |               | 100%          | 33%           |

Figure 20. Presence of Clocks/Watches, St. George's, Bermuda.

*Summary of Bermuda-Annapolis Comparison*

Bermuda inventories from the early eighteenth century have much higher percentages of certain items, such as napkins, cups and saucers, and sets of forks. While Annapolis households appear to be much more likely to have more material goods by the end of the eighteenth century, St. George's household do not necessarily have more material goods at the close of the century.

Annapolis households follow a pattern that one would expect in consideration of the higher prices fetched by tobacco and the less costly manufactured goods available from England in the eighteenth century. It is also apparent either that different elements effect consumption in Bermuda or that things such as availability vary between the two locations.

**CHAPTER V**  
**DETERMINING REASONS FOR DIFFERENCE**

*Similarities and Differences*

The increasing amount of research concerning the style of life in British colonies prior to the American Revolution has led a number of scholars to the conclusion that colonial settlements along the eastern seaboard of America, and among the Caribbean and Atlantic islands have characteristics that make them not only similar to one another but also to England (Deetz 1991, 1993; Greene 1988; Carr and Walsh n.d.). It should not be surprising, therefore, if Bermuda experienced the same increase in material goods as the Chesapeake did during the eighteenth century, as both areas were settled by British subjects, had been settled at roughly the same time, and were exposed to the same London fashions.

In both Bermuda and the Chesapeake, during the early years of the eighteenth century, wealth seems to be distributed fairly evenly among the population --at least, much more so than later in the eighteenth century, when a small segment of the population controls most of the wealth. In both locations the elite controls an increasing portion of the wealth while the poor are less likely to be able to improve their economic



standing. In both areas some of the items unavailable or highly unusual until the eighteenth century (such as tea wares and other exotic goods) that are not even found in England until the turn of the eighteenth century are finding their way to households by the middle to the end of the eighteenth century. This indicates that all colonies are participating in a larger system of trade networks and that the cultural meaning attached to these goods is also leading to increased demand for goods necessary for conspicuous consumption.

The one striking difference is that Bermudians had many "high status" and segmenting items very early in the eighteenth century. Even the poorest wealth groups frequently had linens and sets of cups and saucers. These items were also evenly distributed among the population early in the eighteenth century. It appears, therefore, that the consumer revolution reached Bermuda earlier than it did in the Chesapeake, as Bermudians experienced not only a greater degree of wealth early in the eighteenth century but also saw an increase in material goods approximately a quarter century earlier than residents of the Chesapeake. In Bermuda, however, the second half of the eighteenth century is marked by less growth in material wealth compared to the Chesapeake. Some things are also strangely absent from Bermuda records as compared to the Chesapeake. Clocks, for example, are largely absent from the St. George's sample, as are tea tables. People in the lower wealth groups who had wealth indicators such as fine china and silver early in the eighteenth century do not have things such as clocks at a time when these are relatively common for Chesapeake households. While

expensive goods were likely to have been owned in Bermuda early in the eighteenth century, several of the segmenting, specialized items associated with discipline and order were not. As the century progressed, Bermudians either lacked the ability to purchase these items, or chose other items to indicate status and wealth. Residents of St. George's were less likely to have more diversified types of goods in the latter half of the eighteenth century than during earlier years. Estates in Bermuda were more likely than those in the Chesapeake to have costly, non-essential goods early on, yet the diversity decreases by the end of the century.

### *Reasons for Difference*

Reasons for the difference in the proliferation of material goods in the Chesapeake and Bermuda appear to be numerous. There are several possible explanations for the differences in the material goods represented in probate inventories from Bermuda and the Chesapeake: (1) the economic differences between the locations, (2) the make-up of the people, or more specifically the diverse, cosmopolitan population and the high female to male ratio in Bermuda, and (3) what Shackel (1987) suggests as the cause of shifts in material wealth in Annapolis, namely social stress and competition.

### *Economy*

The foundation of the economy in Bermuda varied substantially from that of the Chesapeake. During the early seventeenth century agriculture was the mainstay of the economy, and a significant shift took place when shipping began to replace agriculture.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, as shipping appeared to strengthen the economy, people saw hope in Bermuda's future. Conspicuous consumption is seen in the probate inventories, and increased efforts were placed in the construction of new, stone structures in St. George's, the capital. The major difference between Bermuda and other colonies is that Bermuda had no goods to export, or at least, nothing that could be produced for export and sale abroad.

The Chesapeake region began exporting tobacco in 1614 (Middleton 1992; Kulikoff 1986), yet throughout the Chesapeake, and despite a few recessions during which tobacco prices fell, the general trend was for income from tobacco to increase over the course of the eighteenth century and especially after 1750 (Kulikoff 1986:119). This indicates that overall, the ability of Chesapeake residents to purchase material goods is likely to have increased during the eighteenth century. Furthermore, Annapolis and Williamsburg became relatively successful urban centers that attracted craftsmen, land speculators, and other businesses during most of the century (Walsh 1983). The diversification, in turn, led to more economic opportunity. This increase in diversity also led to a more self-sufficient economy, which Bermuda never appears to have experienced. Shackel's analysis of probate inventory data from Annapolis shows that "a relationship appears between the socioeconomic fluctuations of the 1720s and the consumption of dining items, scientific instruments and grooming and hygiene items" (Shackel 1993:166).

Indirectly, the availability of material goods in Bermuda may have also decreased over the course of the eighteenth century as preferred trade routes took more northerly approaches than they had in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (see Figure 3)(Brown 1994). Manifests show that the number of ships arriving in St. George's from abroad and particularly England decreased over the course of the eighteenth century. Ships headed more directly for the Chesapeake instead of first approaching Bermuda to the south as the opportunity to load tobacco to take to England made it profitable to approach the Chesapeake more directly. Jarvis (1992) shows that in 1716, ships from abroad that arrived in St. George's accounted for 29 percent of the total, with 8% arriving from England and 11% from the Chesapeake (Figure 21). By 1750, only 1% of the ships arriving in St. George's had originated in England and only 6% were from Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas (Figure 22). As the graphics indicate, more ships that are arriving are Bermudian, and less likely to be bringing foreign wares to the island.

After Bermuda's attempts at agriculture failed, ships from abroad would have less incentive to go there because there were no goods to pick up. Therefore, goods that would have been brought from England would be less likely to find their way to Bermuda. The necessity to pay for new goods with cash instead of being able to trade tobacco for products may have also prompted the lag in acquiring material goods. Industrialization in England meant that colonists, at least those in America, could partake in a protected market. As the speed of industrialization increased, the colonies exported

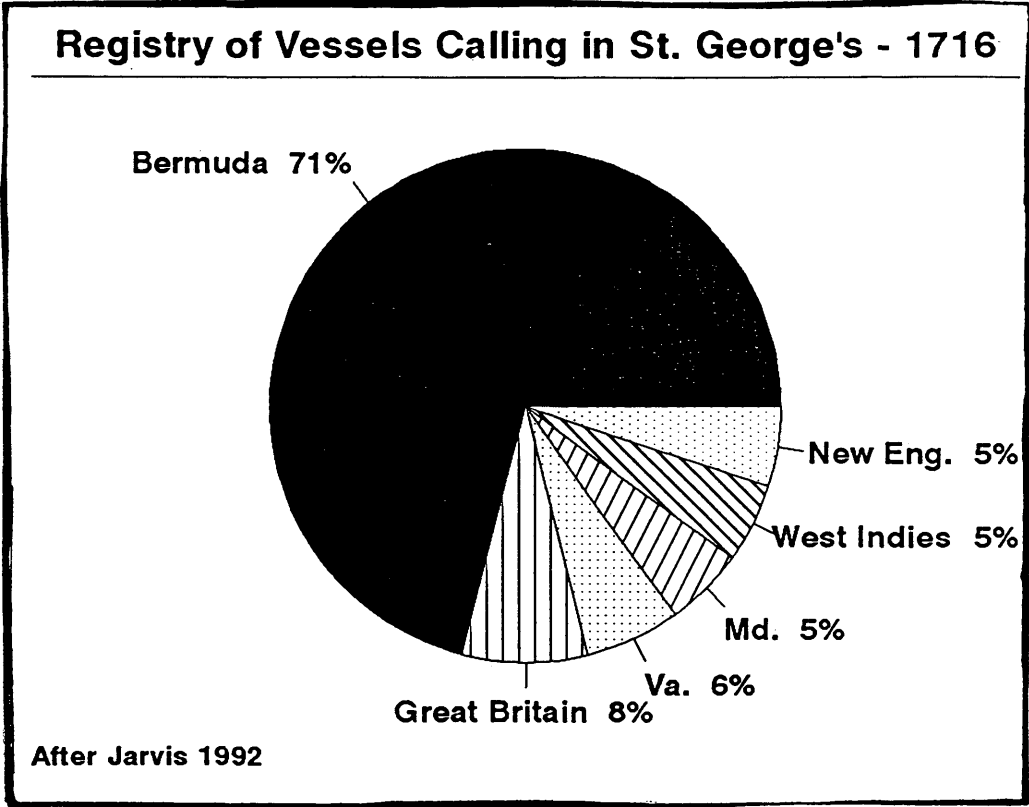


Figure 21. Registry of Vessels Calling in St. George's, 1716.

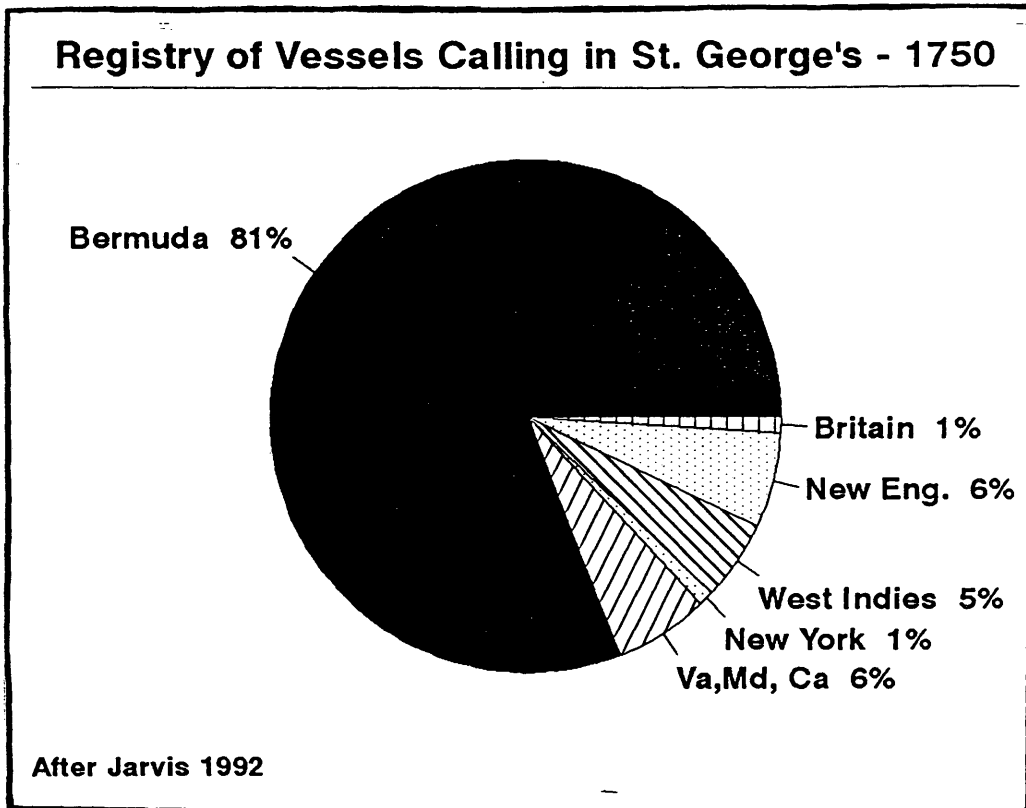


Figure 22. Registry of Vessels Calling in St. George's, 1750.

tobacco to England while England was in turn able to provide inexpensive manufactured goods for the new colonies (Middleton 1992:200). Bermuda had little to benefit from in this market system because it had little to offer.

### Diverse Population

The diverse population of Bermuda is at least in part due indirectly to the economy. From census records, it appears that at any given time, one third to one half of the adult male population was at sea (Wells 1975:177). Travels and exposure to fashionable goods would have increased awareness at home about unusual and exotic goods. A similar example is seen in Charlestown, Massachusetts, where a study of probate inventories reflected diversity in the origin of goods, largely because people had traveled all over the world and had even resided in different countries, thereby exposing them to different goods; perhaps more exotic (Pendery 1992). Bermuda is likely to reflect the same type of diversity. The maritime economy and the cosmopolitan nature of Bermuda is in all likelihood an important factor in evaluating the presence of particular items that can suggest wealth. The high female to male ratio may also have contributed to the diversity in material goods early in the eighteenth century, when women may have been more involved in small cottage industries in Bermuda, as opposed to the Chesapeake, where the population consisted of a higher ratio of men to women.

Little is known about how much privateering took place in Bermuda during the

eighteenth century. Privateering may have made certain goods more accessible during the early part of the eighteenth century. Illicit trade in the form of piracy is also known to have taken place off the coast of Bermuda, yet this data rarely finds its way into the documentary record. As the legitimacy of the island grew in light of the British military presence, ships were more carefully monitored. Access would have been limited, requiring cash to obtain certain "status" goods instead of intercepting merchant vessels. Compared to the Chesapeake, where the agriculturally based economy always required a return from goods sold before a profit could be made and luxury items purchased, Bermudians may have enjoyed better access to fine goods early in the century because these would have been devalued early in eighteenth century because cash was not necessary to obtain them. Conversely, in the Chesapeake, the prices fetched by tobacco in the English market grew at the same time as manufactured goods from England dropped in price, thus increasing the buying power of the Chesapeake planters.

### Social Stress and Competition

The third explanation for the high status items in early inventories and their subsequent disappearance is what Shackel suggests occurs in Annapolis at different times. This is that social stress brought about competition, and that therefore the dramatic changes in material culture in the Chesapeake which served to define socio-economic classes, occur in the 1720s and 1730s and then again just prior to the American Revolution (Shackel 1987:154)(which encourages distinctions in material goods among people to flaunt social hierarchy.). It is at these times, he argues, that social and



economic pressure would have been the greatest. Urban areas should tend to experience more stress because of, among other things, population pressure. In the Chesapeake, this stress was met in part with increased demand for material goods, Shackel argues. It is also clear that population pressure and demand for arable land led to migration in order to plant larger plantations with tobacco and increase wealth. Bermuda, unlike the Chesapeake, was not able to keep up with increased demand for land and income. Early colonists called Bermuda "...the richest healthfullest and pleasing land...as ever man sat foote upon" (Silvanus Jourdan, quoted in Lefroy 1981 Vol.I:16, cited by Crane 1990:232). The island colony that had at one time been acclaimed as a paradise quickly lost its ability to provide economic opportunities. Poor soil and the inability to compete with the tobacco producing colonies of the Chesapeake led to the downfall of tobacco growing in Bermuda and by 1705 only enough tobacco was being produced to meet local demand. By 1723 it was noted that "This Island, which was formerly one of the most fruitful, is now near worn out: And such is and will be the Fate of all small Islands, where People increase so fast, and so consistently keep their Lands tilled" (Cited in Crane 1990:234).

Using Shackel's hypothesis, it appears that competition and social stress in Bermuda may have been first felt in the very early years of the eighteenth century, when increased economic opportunity created the ability for people set themselves apart from others by acquiring fine goods. Later, the population pressure and economic decline caused a reversal in this pattern. The following conclusion and observations provide a

possible explanation for the changes in material wealth in Bermuda.

### **Conclusion and Additional Observations**

The amount of serious, scholarly research that has taken place in Bermuda over the last decade has contributed significantly to our understanding of Bermuda's rich history. On another level, this island colony is part of the larger British colonial system, and further research of this region promotes our comprehension of the intricacies of colonialism and the development of uniquely Bermudian or uniquely American societies within that system. "...Historical archaeology deals with the spread of European culture into all parts of the world...[and] we are provided with an opportunity to examine the way in which any European society, industrial or preindustrial, changed under different environmental constraints" (Deetz 1993:163).

This thesis contributes to our understanding of one aspect of the social development of Bermuda by comparing probate inventories from St. George's to data gathered in two other British colonial capitals. As discussed in this chapter, there are still many questions regarding life in Bermuda during the eighteenth century. It is important to put this research within the context of previous work conducted in Bermuda in order to synthesize the information available to date. The study of Bermuda's past has benefited from an interdisciplinary approach, and the work of archaeologists, historical architects, and historians has helped to round out the information gained from the documentary record and actually reach an understanding of *behavior* in the past.

It has become increasingly noticeable, through archaeological, architectural, and historical research, that many symbols of a relatively wealthy society are to be found in St. George's as well as the remainder of Bermuda for the period immediately after the turn of the eighteenth century. As shown in the previous chapter, probate inventories quickly reveal that high status goods are quite prevalent, suggesting that Bermuda's economy, at least during the early part of the century, was prosperous, and residents were able at least for some time to keep up with the latest London fashions. This shows that Bermuda actively participated in the economic and cultural trends of the larger colonial system. Leone (1988:235) suggests that there are three levels to the shift in worldview from yeoman to Georgian. The first of these is the introduction of scientific instruments, clocks, and musical instruments in Annapolis between 1710-1730. These are non-essential items that are used for leisure and to order natural phenomena such as time through the use of clocks. The second change, beginning in 1730 and continuing until the nineteenth century, is marked by increasing amounts of segmenting artifacts associated with dining and other aspects of everyday life (Leone 1988:240). The period from 1730 to 1770 is also marked by the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth (Leone 1988:247). The final stage is marked by changes in architecture and landscape architecture and take place in Annapolis in the 1760s. Leone argues that these changes signify that the builders or the owners of these properties are attempting to justify power, particularly in light of the impending American Revolution (Leone 1988:240).

St. George's is virtually untouched by these final stages in the transition to a

Georgian worldview. The town plan of St. George's is haphazard (Wilkinson 1950:324; Gosner 1988:85), with irregularly shaped plots of land accessible only by narrow, winding paths. No thought appears to have been given to the symmetry or order that one sees in colonial towns in other areas. Other British colonies appear to have had much more success in creating and realizing town plans, including Williamsburg, Virginia; Annapolis, Maryland; Port Royal, Jamaica; and Chirsteansted, St. Croix (Gosner 1983:51). Considering that most of the permanent, stone structures were built after the beginning of the eighteenth century makes this even more surprising. Since houses are the most visible remains of Bermuda's past these provide a valuable comparison to documentary research. These should also indicate whether changes in worldview take place over time. As Glassie says, "Culture is pattern in mind, the ability to make things like sentences or houses" (Glassie 1975:17).

Research conducted by architectural historians reflects findings similar to those resulting from probate inventory analysis. Building styles seen in structures from the early eighteenth century in Bermuda exhibit the same characteristics of grandeur and elegance as seen in the Chesapeake around mid-century. Furthermore, the Bermudian structures that date from the mid-eighteenth century and as much as one hundred years later show remarkably little innovation and subsequent styles are more or less a resurgence of older styles (Chappell, Personal Communication 1994).

Bermuda has many early structures, perhaps more than any other British colony

(Gosner 1988:78). John Adams, in his research on the stone houses of Bermuda, has noted that a number of early-eighteenth-century structures that have been documented relatively well have symmetrical features. Waterville, for example, dating to 1735 is very much Georgian in style. Even Verdmont (Figure 23), constructed sometime around 1700 by John Dickinson, Speaker of the House of Assembly, has Georgian elements. The hipped roof and symmetrical arrangement of windows make it an example of the elaboration in early Bermuda architecture. There is no doubt that Verdmont hardly represents typical late-seventeenth-century architecture, but it suggests that at least the elite recognized symmetry and order as being symbols of their socio-economic status. A number of other examples of grand structures with Georgian proportions exist in Bermuda. Radnor, in Southhampton Parish, and the Rectory in Sandy's Parish (a Tucker family home) are very similar to Verdmont and also date to the early-eighteenth century. Pamela Gosner describes several structures dating to the first quarter of the eighteenth century, and points out that there are a number of structures like Sleepy Hollow (c. 1710), where "The verticality and broken outline of the Middle Ages are gone; here horizontality, symmetry, and a sense of repose are all-important...Sleepy Hollow is the bridge between the medieval and the Georgian style..." (Gosner 1983:12). It should be noted that Sleepy Hollow has been extensively remodeled, yet it is also important to note that a number of architectural historians including Gosner have recognized the early date at which Bermuda's architecture shows Georgian elements.

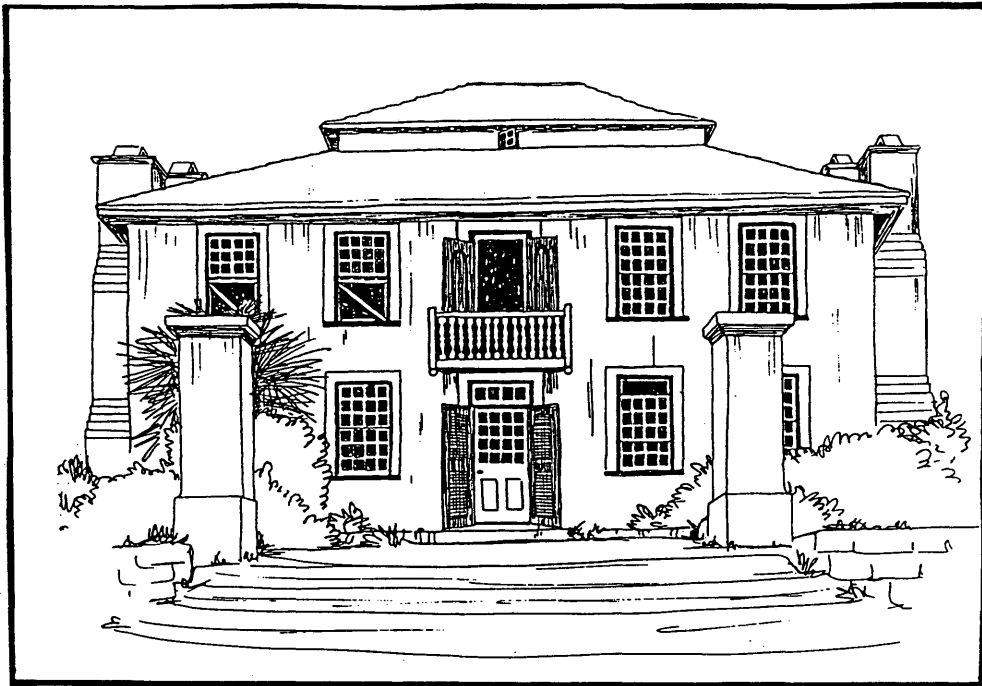


Figure 23. Drawing of Verdmont, Devonshire Parish, Bermuda.  
(Gosner 1983:84)

As with the probate inventory analysis described in Chapter 4 of this text, it is the mid-eighteenth century that is marked by less elaboration, less grandeur, less diversity, and an overall reversion to a more medieval pattern. Structures such as Winterhaven Fawn (Smith's Parish), a quite typical building for mid-eighteenth-century Bermuda, has certain elements that are Georgian, such as symmetrical fenestration, yet the windows are placed directly below the eaves, which is more typical of a much earlier Bermuda building style. The placement of the outbuildings also lacks any semblance of symmetry or order (Adams 1989). There are a number of other buildings that date to the mid-eighteenth century that have features similar to those of earlier structures. Springfield (Figure 24), located in Somerset, for example, was constructed around mid-century and retains features such as asymmetrical fenestration and ells (original to the building) extending from the rear of the house giving it the appearance of being an older structure with additions having been added (Brown et al. 1994). Tamarind's Call, built by a prominent family in Hamilton, is another example of a structure dating to the mid-eighteenth century that is clearly not of Georgian proportions, with traditional "welcoming arms" stairs and asymmetrical design (Adams, Personal Communication). Saltcoats is also a late-eighteenth-century structure that has the outward appearance of dating to the seventeenth century (Chappell, Personal Communication). Very few, if any, examples of Georgian architecture dating to the mid-eighteenth century exist in Bermuda (Adams, Personal Communication; Chappell, Personal Communication). This is at a time when the American colonies see the construction of hundreds of examples

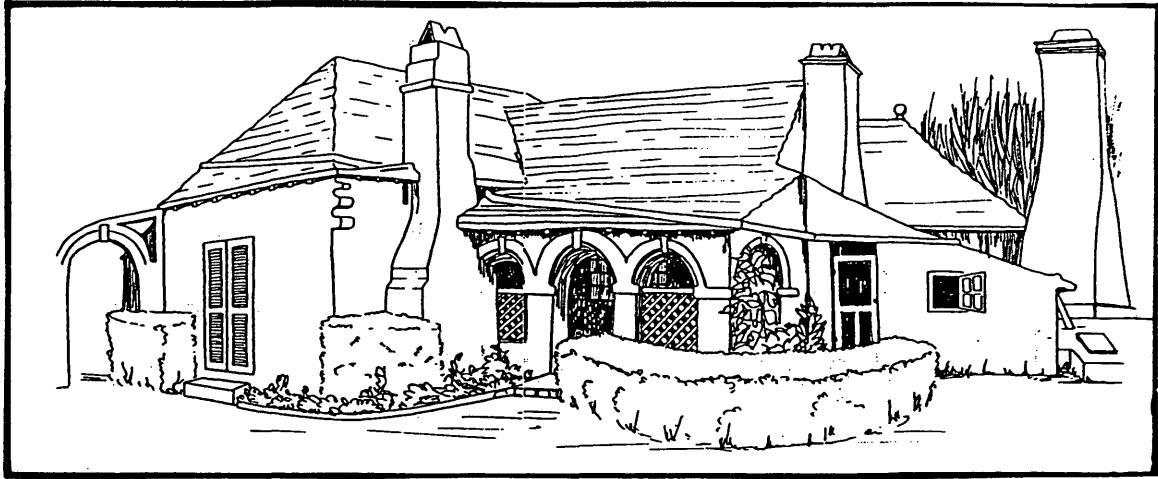


Figure 24. Drawing of Springfield, Sandy's Parish, Bermuda.  
(Gosner 1983:89)



of Georgian buildings. This return to earlier building styles in Bermuda, especially among the elite (Adams 1989), appears to be quite common until the turn of the nineteenth century, when building styles reject traditional Bermudian architecture and become more "English", most likely due to the strong presence of the British military after the American Revolution and during the construction of the Royal Naval Dockyard during the early years of the nineteenth century. At the end of the nineteenth century the rejection of traditional Bermuda style goes so far as a repudiation of Bermuda cedar in favor of imported mahogany (Adams 1989).

Reasons for the resurgence of older Bermuda styles is not understood, and stylistic development of eighteenth-century architecture is in fact only now being explored in more detail (Chappell 1994, Personal Communication). Leone (1987, cited by Shackel 1993:167) suggests that the construction of brick buildings in eighteenth-century Annapolis was a form of ostentation in times of instability. In this sense, Bermuda's material culture may reflect the population pressure and economic decline of the eighteenth century by reverting to the styles of the previous century. That is, Bermudians appear to be linking their material worlds, and by extension themselves, to their ancestors and thereby to a more stable period in Bermuda's history. The importance of lineage is still recognized in Bermuda today, and it is likely that these influences were felt as early as the eighteenth century when social stress in light of economic decline was first felt. The idea that an appearance of age is used to express status is not a new one. Grant McCracken's theory of "patina" states that an object

possesses patina in direct proportion to its age, and that "the age of an object stands in direct proportion to the duration of its ownership by a family" which in turn "represents the length of time that this family has enjoyed a certain social status" (1988:36). In the case of Bermuda, the rapid development to "Georgian" qualities in architecture and in the material record as seen in probate inventories, is followed by a return to traditional Bermuda architecture as well as lack of diversity in other material goods (Chappell 1992; Personal Communication 1994).

Only a few properties in Bermuda have been examined archaeologically, and while enough archaeological assemblages for the purpose of comparison have yet to be recovered, these could eventually be used to evaluate Greene's hypothesis of economic stagnation. In particular, a cross-section of sites from different time periods could be compared to sites from the Chesapeake to analyze the types of goods found in archaeological contexts. To date, only one excavation of a domestic site has resulted in the recovery of data for comparison of artifacts to similar sites from Williamsburg. Archaeology at the Tucker House in St. George's has indicated that Henry Tucker (archaeological contexts dating to the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth), a man of considerable social status, and considered to be one of the wealthiest residents of Bermuda, had material remains that were quite different than the homes of persons of similar stature in the Chesapeake. Two measures of overall economic status were used to analyze the Tucker assemblages. While more diversity was apparent, suggesting "a more international trade network than mainland North America"

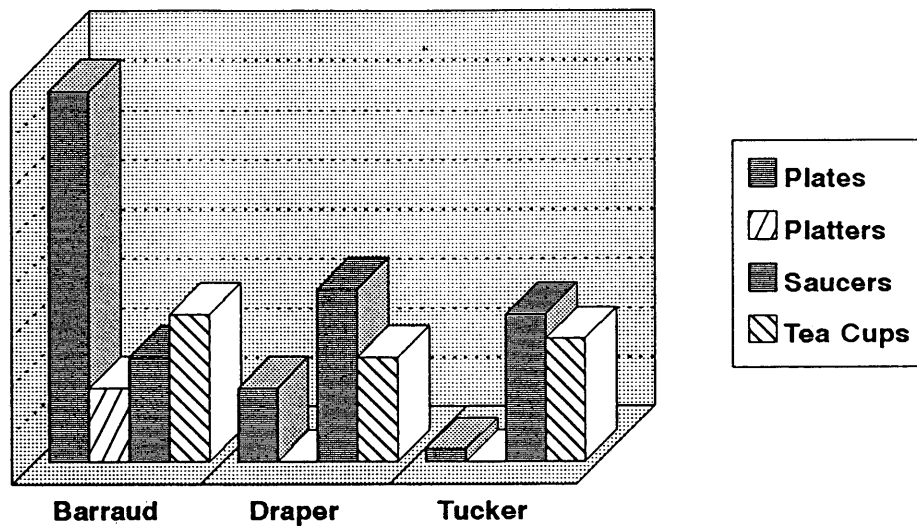
(Brown et al. 1991:3.18), a comparison of three archaeological assemblages, the Barraud and Draper sites in Williamsburg, and the Tucker assemblage suggests that the status indicated by the material goods of Henry Tucker is more comparable to the assemblage of a relatively successful blacksmith (Draper) than that of a Doctor (Barraud), whom one would expect to be of similar social status (Figure 25).

In terms of Greene's hypothesis of socio-economic stasis, it appears that while there is a surprising amount of diversity in early years as well as a high degree of "status" goods, the period after approximately 1740 is marked by stagnation and even a decrease in material wealth. Bermuda experienced the "consumer revolution" earlier than the Chesapeake, yet the economy began to stagnate at around the same time that the Chesapeake began to flourish. As Deetz suggests (1993), the constraints of differing environments and other factors such as economy affect the variations in the behavior pattern. "Historical Archaeology need not be confined to describing and reconfirming what we already know. It is important that we participate [and recognize] that culture change is not an evolutionary but an historical process. Change is persistent but the direction is often unknown" (Shackel 1993:169).

Study of various forms of material culture, as in this analysis of probate inventories, will ultimately reveal a clearer picture of the social development of Bermuda. These findings suggest that the increase in material goods in the British colonies is linked both to increasing "Georgianization" as well as competition and social

# Chinese Porcelain Tea and Table Wares

Barraud, Draper, and Tucker



After Brown et al. 1991

Figure 25. Chinese Porcelain Tea and Table Wares in Barraud, Draper, and Tucker Archaeological Assemblages.

(After Brown et al. 1991)

stress. Just as culture is a symbiotic relationship between dynamic and interacting systems, the relationship between the documentary record, architectural research, and ultimately, the archaeological record reflect changes in the worldview of the participants in any system. The British colonial system represents one entity with varying degrees of difference and only additional research will yield more conclusive patterns.

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