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## Social Inequality and Turn-of-the-Century Farmsteads: Issues of Class, Status, Ethnicity, and Race

### Introduction

Archaeological investigations of 20th-century agrarian sites will generate, as so aptly stated by Leslie Stewart-Abernathy (1986:1), “data on ordinary people of two or three generations ago whose routines of daily life were too recently abandoned to interest many scholars, but are long enough ago to be outside the personal experiences of most people today.” The total farm population of the United States dropped from about 42 percent in 1900 to 2 percent in 1985 (U. S. Bureau of Census 1975:457, Series K 1–16; 1986:619, No. 1093). Obviously, a transformation has occurred in American society, encompassing a major shift in economy, occupation, settlement pattern, and lifestyle. Because material culture has changed concomitantly, the research techniques and perspectives of archaeology can provide insights for the study of rural processes of cultural change.

Agrarian material culture—crafted, purchased, reused, curated, and discarded—serves as a mirror of cultural maintenance and change. The focus on the “things” connected to farm life provides a unifying perspective for exploring the transformation of social and economic structures of daily life. Clear delineation of the interplay between various social and economic factors is necessary in order to investigate the relationship between material culture and these structures.

The following epistemological exploration provides a framework for analyzing the social stratification of one Upland South community in North Carolina from about A.D. 1900 to 1940. Specific examples derive from a rural, crossroads community, while the analysis of the relationship between

material culture and agrarian life is provided through the survey and excavation of two Piedmont farms. Each farm was inhabited by two generations of their respective families. One family was black, the other white, and both owned their small farms. Members of these adjacent farmsteads were connected by a web of social and economic interactions. Institutionalized racism was superseded, in part, by a shared sense of rural community.

### Theoretical Considerations of Social Stratification

The term “socioeconomic status” is often used by archaeologists (Otto 1980; Orser 1984; Bronitsky et al. 1985; Drucker and Anthony 1985; France 1985; Riordan 1985). Little consensus exists for the definition of this term either in archaeology or sociology (Gordon 1963:211–220).

“Socioeconomic status” was first used by early 20th-century sociologists who were attempting to develop empirical measures of status. One classic definition maintains that socioeconomic status is a position occupied “with reference to the prevailing average standards of cultural possessions, effective income, material possessions and participation in group activity of the community” (Chapin in Gordon 1963:213). Elsewhere, others stress that the term refers to a set of attitudes about stratification in a particular society (Gordon 1963:214). Unfortunately, most developers of socioeconomic indices appear to be uncertain as to what they are actually measuring, and how best to test the validity of their scales (Sewell 1940; Lundberg 1942; Knupfer and Merton 1943; Warner et al. 1960; Gordon 1963:211–214). As a result, archaeologists find small value in adapting socioeconomic indices to their interpretations of their data. Anthropologist Lloyd Fallers (1973:7) notes that socioeconomic status is a “hard-science-sounding term which achieves its quantifiability as a ‘variable’ by fudging . . . complexities.”

The complexities of social and economic life need not be blurred by the use of imprecise concepts. “Social stratification” is a heuristic concept

pertaining to the “hierarchical ordering of the members of a society into strata according to several criteria of rank” (Tumin 1970:14). It has multiple dimensions, related to aspects of power (e.g., political), social status (e.g., honors and privileges), and economic classes (e.g., relationship to the means of production) (Gordon 1963:218; Ossowski 1963; Tumin 1970:14–15; Fallers 1973; Berreman 1981).

Gerald Berreman (1981:12–17, Table 1.3), following Weber, has developed concise definitions for these interrelated concepts. He believes that stratification occurs along two distinctive lines: status strata, based upon honors and privileges, and class strata, based in the main upon economic factors. The latter includes social classes—associations and sodalities—and economic classes. In the former, status strata, social qualities are thought to be intrinsic to membership, or ascribed (Gordon 1963:238). Investigation of this category could include the examination of perceptions of personal qualities, the influence of kinship ties, perceptions of the quality of specific status positions, and judgment about the proper acting out of roles by strata members (Gordon 1963:245). Status strata would also include ethnic and racial divisions. The major distinction between these two categories is in their origin. Ethnic groups are self aware, and are usually characterized by attributes that are determined by group members. Outsiders also may believe that members share particular characteristics. Racial groups are usually not self aware and often exist as cohesive units only in the minds of researchers and other social groups. Ethnicity might be best thought of as a self-imposed category, and race as a category imposed by outsiders (Keefe 1980; Barth 1981a, 1981b; Berreman 1981).

In class strata, qualities are thought to be achieved, or extrinsic to any one member. Factors such as income, access to credit, and control of employment and wages may be examined to help delineate economic classes (Gordon 1963:239, 242; Berreman 1981). Social classes may be investigated by studying political groups and by determining which groups control information flow in the society (Gordon 1963:239, 243). Each ana-

lytical entity can be investigated as to whether members themselves recognize that they form a particular group—emic category—or as to whether the categories are imposed by the researcher—etic category (Berreman 1981:28–29). For explorations of class definitions, including emic recognition of a “class for themselves” as well as “in itself,” see Fallers (1973:13), Gordon (1963:6–7), and Ossowski (1963).

These aspects of social stratification can and do crosscut one another, and the interplay of these strata and their subcategories has interest to archaeologists. The examination of the multiple dimensions of social inequality should lead to the investigation of social and economic processes and their relationship to material culture.

One aspect of stratification that affects both social and class strata is occupation. Occupational ranking is used to describe functional groupings in a population. When tied to specific categories of wealth or income, occupational categories can be viewed as signposts to economic strata within a specific culture (Gordon 1963:223–227). Occupations often have status implications, as well, because jobs tend to have certain associated privileges. American agrarian occupations in the 20th century, for example, have been divided into an “agricultural ladder.”

### The Agricultural Ladder

Emancipation of the slaves forever changed the economy of the South. Planters had to either devise new methods of guaranteeing their farm labor or learn to adapt existing structures to new economic circumstances. Credit systems and marketing strategies also had to be metamorphosed. Smaller farmers were caught up in a rural economy that forced them to switch from growing primarily subsistence crops to a concentration on cash crops such as tobacco and cotton (Wright 1986: 107–111). As the 20th century progressed, time-honored methods of animal-plow agriculture became devalued in the eyes of the federal government and large landowners. Mechanization came to the fore, with its concomitant need for

TABLE 4-1  
THE AGRICULTURAL LADDER

Social Stratification (highest to lowest)

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Owner, part-owner no mortgage  
 Owner, part-owner with mortgage  
 Share, cash, standing renter  
 Sharecropper  
 Day laborer (away from home)  
 Paid laborer, cropper, tenant (family farm)  
 Unpaid family laborer

Source: Hamilton 1937:74.

large capitalization. As a result, many southern farmers found themselves off the farm, switching occupations. Those who remained tended to be large landholders engaged in a new form of farming, agribusiness (Daniel 1985:xi, 6, 73, 104, 156; Wright 1986:232-246).

The late 19th through the early 20th centuries brought about changes in the southern agricultural system which were reflected in the creation of a rigid, hierarchical order of social stratification, called the "agricultural ladder." This system of categorization was based on criteria of farm occupation and relationship to credit (Table 4-1). Its categories were formalized by Depression-era government census enumerators and rural sociologists. This system of stratification was soon equated with economic strata that had specific connotations of social superiority and inferiority. Both black and white agriculturalists knew that this idealized version of the ladder represented hope for their upward mobility. Moving up the ladder was equated with gaining autonomy, because the highest rungs assured control of labor, crops, and profits.

C. Horace Hamilton, of the North Carolina State Agricultural Experiment Station, headed a project in 1937 to study the consequences of certain federal legislation on farm operators and their families. He and his team interviewed about 1,700 families in five rural areas of North Carolina, incorporating samples from the coast, the Piedmont, and the mountains, and discovered that:

The agricultural ladder in rural North Carolina is used only by a small percentage of farm families; and from one-third

to one half of those using the ladder are coming down rather than going up. About three-fourths of those families at the top of the ladder were placed there by their parents or jumped there, barely touching some of the lower rungs (Hamilton 1937:88).

Approximately one in nine farm family heads changed ladder positions every year. Those on the lower rungs, however, tended to change position more frequently than those higher up (Hamilton 1937:55, Table 18).

Hamilton's (1937:78) data suggest that initial ladder position strongly influenced subsequent position. Available statistics do not portray a steady shift upward through each category (Table 4-2). For example, more farm owners derived from the farm laborer category than from the cropper or tenant categories. Furthermore, sharecroppers and cash tenants tended to remain in one of those categories or to slip to laborers. Both general and farm laborers, however, appear to have had an equal ability to acquire any of the positions on the ladder.

White tenants had a much greater chance of becoming farm owners than did black tenants. Furthermore, none of the black farm laborers interviewed had slid from an original owner or tenant position, unlike a small portion of their white counterparts. In some cases race may have cut across the ladder ranking. Some individuals may have seen any black—owner, tenant, or laborer—as social inferiors (Wright 1986:100-101). One African-American farmer in Alabama, Nate Shaw, fought against this kind of racism in the early 1920s and states in his autobiography that "years ago I heard that President Lincoln freed the colored people; but it didn't amount to a hill of beans" (Rosengarten 1974:34). Shaw's story of his attempts to move up the ladder, in spite of his race, demonstrates how his "blackness" often put him at a disadvantage (Rosengarten 1974:188-189).

Due to the crop-lien system, landowners and merchants were legally able to gain ownership of stock, farm implements, and land in return for nonpayment of debts. In many cases, "it was much simpler to secure a transfer of ownership of chattels and deeds to land than to foreclose by forced sale" (Clark 1946:43). Debt-ridden farmers

TABLE 4-2  
RELATIONSHIP OF INITIAL LADDER POSITION TO POSITION IN 1935  
Ladder Position (%)

Position	Owners	Tenants	Croppers	Farm Laborers	General Laborers	Other	Total
Owners							
Black	40.6	7.8	14.1	20.3	17.2	0.0	100%
White	31.8	20.2	9.3	22.0	15.1	1.6	100%
Tenants							
Black	1.3	28.8	22.5	23.8	22.5	1.3	100%
White	3.3	29.1	21.8	26.5	18.5	0.7	100%
Croppers							
Black	2.2	6.7	42.2	26.7	22.2	0.0	100%
White	2.0	5.6	38.6	33.9	19.9	0.0	100%
Farm Laborers							
Black	0.0	0.0	37.5	31.3	25.0	6.3	100%
White	3.2	3.2	29.0	48.4	14.5	1.6	100%
General Laborers							
Black	1.3	1.3	17.9	19.2	60.3	0.0	100%
White	2.5	7.5	11.7	15.0	62.5	0.8	100%

Source: adapted from Hamilton 1937:78, Table 24.

were well aware of this situation and worked hard to pay off their accounts. Some farmers, such as Shaw's brother, did not attempt to finance the purchase of property. Shaw believes that his brother had no belief in the promises of the agricultural ladder: "So, it might have been to his way of thinking that it weren't no use in climbing too fast; weren't no use in climbing slow, neither, if they was goin' to take everything you worked for when you got too high" (Rosengarten 1974:27).

The archaeological implications of changing ladder position are important. Comparisons of owner, tenant, and laborer material culture should take into account that ladder position is variable both across time and space. Sites may not simply have assemblages generated by one family, or from families occupying only one position on the ladder. The shifting composition of the family, their access to credit, and the vagaries of the local economy must also be considered. This is not simply a cautionary tale. Archaeologists do have means of comparing assemblages collected from the same region, using similar field methods.

A statistical test using discriminate analysis has

helped to predict whether or not a collection was produced by owners or tenants according to ethnicity. Using raw data from 32 farm sites in the Richland Creek area of Texas (Bruseth and Moir 1987), the analysis of Roy Stine (1989) was from 75 to 89 percent accurate in predicting ladder position and in distinguishing between black and white owners, who in turn were distinguishable from tenants. Tenants, regardless of race, however, could not be as easily delineated. Furthermore, black owners' goods, while distinct in range and percentage, were more similar to those of white tenants than they were to those of black tenants or white owners (R. Stine 1989).

The agricultural ladder had emic implications as well. Status strata ranking, usually less explicit than class strata, appears to have been based in part upon ladder category. In this case honors and privileges were supposed to be awarded to those on the highest rung. Margaret Hagood (1977[1939]:39) writes that the idealized version of the ladder "guarantees opportunity to all that economic and social classes are open, an essential of a functioning democracy." She discovered in 1937 that

white tenants in the North Carolina Piedmont felt that the agricultural hierarchy was rigid. Many tenants indicated that they knew their economic position could not improve, and instead attempted to improve their social status, accomplishing it through working hard, living right, and raising good children. White tenant girls were watched closely by their parents to ensure that they remained respectable. Children were dressed as well as economically possible, and farm owners' children were only slightly better dressed than were most tenants' children (Hagood 1977[1939]:86, 130, 148).

Hagood also discovered a definite verbal distinction made between owners and tenants. Many adults made a point to label farm-owner neighbors as such, regardless of how friendly they may have been (Hagood 1977[1939]:180–181). These tenants had an awareness of farm owners as a separate class, but did not seem to have had a similar awareness of themselves as a class (Hagood 1977 [1939]:180–182; McMath 1977).

Status strata appear to have been based upon honors and privileges corresponding to achieving active control over one's farm and labor. This was accomplished through reaching a high rung on the agricultural ladder. Ranking was also based on the general neighborhood perception of a family as being hardworking and honest or slovenly and dishonest. Many North Carolina farmers knew the story of the dogwood, "that the Lord forced to grow crooked in repentance for serving as the wood for the Cross" (Kenneth Stine 1987, pers. comm.), which seems related to the belief that crooked crop rows reflected a shiftless personality (Daniel 1985:67). One son of an Illinois tenant (ca. 1910) remembers that his father repeatedly told his children to plant corn "so straight that when he looked down that row of corn all he could see was one stalk" (Wellman France 1987, pers. comm.). The informant was never sure if his father was simply a hard taskmaster instilling pride in his children, or a man overly concerned with his neighbors' perceptions.

Although Piedmont tenants thought that the "country is the only place for rearing homes, good children," they also hoped that these same off-

spring would find a different occupation (Hagood 1977[1939]:179). They believed their children would escape the cycle of debt and poverty often associated with a rural lifestyle (Hagood 1977 [1939]:26). The contradiction between agrarian values and aspirations and the harsh realities of making a living from agriculture were well known (Gaston 1973:206; Darling 1983:20–23, 55; Daniel 1985:167–168). Black farmers held the same hopes for their children as did white farmers (McDaniel 1982:202; Darling 1983:17, 67), and farm families in general believed rural life offered the best possible environment for teaching their children values, including honest work, a willingness to help others, and a love of the land.

Thus, some aspects of ranking may have cross-cut position on the agricultural ladder. Tenant/landlord relations were modified if they shared ties of kinship, and certain family names in a community might become synonymous with specific behavioral traits (Hagood 1977[1939]:48–49). Above all, personal interactions seem to have superseded many institutional aspects of stratification. A black tenant may have ranked higher in status strata than a white counterpart, especially if the former was seen to work harder or participate in community functions more often than the latter. Indeed, the opposite also could be true. Although a particular farmer's position on the ladder might suggest that he or she had a high class strata position, he or she in reality may have had less esteem in the community—i.e., a lower status strata position.

Archaeologists must keep these possible variations and permutations in mind when exploring the probable class and status strata positions of particular site inhabitants. Archaeologists often make assumptions about linking the simple dichotomies of black/white, poor/wealthy, and owner/tenant. The chain of assumptions that inexpensive goods = poor, poor = tenant, tenant = black leads to the conclusion that inexpensive goods at a site resulted from a poor black tenant occupation. An entire host of related assumptions follow about black and white interaction—i.e., racism—and quality of life. The obverse is also true, with expensive goods perceived as being indicative of wealth.

TABLE 4-3  
OCCUPATIONS IN TURNERSBURG TOWNSHIP, NORTH CAROLINA, IN 1910

Occupation	Black		White		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Laborer	27	28.13	31	12.56	58	16.91
Farmer	60	62.50	177	71.66	237	69.10
Retired farmer	0	0.00	6	2.43	6	1.75
Blacksmith	1	1.04	1	0.40	2	0.58
Carpenter	0	0.00	2	0.81	2	0.58
Errand boy	1	1.04	0	0.00	1	0.29
Errand girl	1	1.04	0	0.00	1	0.29
Servant	1	1.04	1	0.40	2	0.58
Cook	2	2.08	2	0.81	4	1.17
Housekeeper	0	0.00	2	0.81	2	0.58
Seamstress	0	0.00	1	0.40	1	0.29
Miller	0	0.00	1	0.40	1	0.29
Sawyer	0	0.00	1	0.40	1	0.29
Lumberman	0	0.00	1	0.40	1	0.29
Merchant	0	0.00	6	2.43	6	1.75
Salesman	0	0.00	3	1.21	3	0.87
Minister	2	2.08	1	0.40	3	0.87
Doctor	0	0.00	2	0.81	2	0.58
Teacher	1	0.29	5	2.02	6	1.75
Mailman	0	0.00	3	1.21	3	0.87
Postmaster	0	0.00	1	0.40	1	0.29
Total	96	99.99	247	99.96	343	99.97

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1910, Turnersburg Township.

This leads to assumptions about political power, labor control, quality of life, and community relations. This examination reveals, however, that the determination of relative or absolute costs of an assemblage is just the first step in the determination of status or class strata position of the site's former inhabitants.

Timothy Riordan (1985) discusses how stratification is multiplex and how social position is dependent upon myriad social and economic factors. He states that economic status is directly observable in an artifact assemblage. This conclusion is based on the assumption that inhabitants in a single region have equal means of material acquisition, equal desire to purchase similar goods, and equal access to those goods. This negates the influence of factors such as individual or ethnic choice, differential access to goods, and comparable wealth. As stated elsewhere, the origin of materials on a

site must be determined before assessing the ramifications of relative economic costs (cf. Adams and Boling 1989:94). In the following section the assemblages from two Piedmont sites are compared in light of relative access to goods (stores/neighbors/home production), means (cash/barter/credit), and site distributions (artifact patterns).

#### Material Culture and Social Stratification in Harmony

Harmony is a small crossroads community located in Turnersburg Township, northeast Iredell County, North Carolina. The area is characterized by small rolling hills, overlooked by the Brushy Mountains, foothills to the Blue Ridge. In 1910 over 70 percent of the working population was classified as consisting of farmers. The informa-

TABLE 4-4  
PERCENT OF OWNERSHIP AND TENANCY IN 1910, IREDELL COUNTY AND TURNERSBURG  
TOWNSHIP, NORTH CAROLINA

	North Carolina	Iredell Co.	Turnersburg Twp.	
White owners	49.04	54.52	53.09 <sup>1</sup>	72.10 <sup>2</sup>
Black owners	8.49	6.00	13.45	24.17
White tenants	25.00	29.29	22.18	3.75
Black tenants	17.47	10.18	11.27	0.00
Total	100.00	99.99	99.99	100.02

<sup>1</sup>Percent of tenants derived from number of renters, as opposed to owners of homes.

<sup>2</sup>Percent determined from number of farmers recorded as working for others.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1910, Manuscript and Summary Census.

tion in Table 4-3 points to the unequal population distribution in the township. Only 96 blacks (28%), as opposed to 247 whites (72%), are listed as working. (The ratio for the total population of 1,401 individuals is similar.) The results of a Chi-square test of association show that ethnicity and occupational category are significantly related ( $p = .098$ ; L. Stine 1989:75-78). This finding implies that the range of employment opportunities was greater for whites than for blacks in Turnersburg Township. Nine out of 21 categories listed blacks, as opposed to 19 with white workers. Farming was the occupation of choice for most Harmony area residents, both black and white.

Rates of farm tenancy and ownership are comparable at the levels of state, county, and township (Table 4-4). The data in the last column of Table 4-4 appear to represent those farmers who were share tenants in the Harmony area. Most important is the fact that no black farmers were counted in that category. Only a few white families were listed as such ( $n = 9$ ). By far the majority in both groups in the township were recorded as farming on their "own account." Most of the others are listed as farm laborers or as employers of farm laborers. Thus, the agricultural ladder appears to have been truncated in the Harmony area.

The members of the two case-study farm families had been previous tenants who were able to climb a rung on the ladder. The Nicholsons, a black family, and the Stines, a white family, were able to

purchase land by 1910. The Nichols family owned about 30 acres of well-drained, relatively flat land with a spring. Two acres were reserved for cotton, producing four to five bales a year. They occasionally rented additional cropland in the area (Carson Nichols 1986, pers. comm.). Their neighbors, the Stine family, initially purchased about 70 acres of clear-cut, eroded, hilly land, and cultivated between 30 and 40 acres. The Stines planted up to eight acres in cotton, producing 7 to 27 bales per year (Kenneth Stine 1987, pers. comm.).

Both the Nichols and Stine family members harvested just enough cotton to pay their yearly taxes, and to purchase staples such as coffee, tea, and sugar (Carson Nichols 1986, pers. comm.; Kenneth Stine 1987, pers. comm.; Margaret Prekler 1987, pers. comm.; Betty Hendrix 1987, pers. comm.). They also grew corn, wheat, peanuts, potatoes, beans, cabbage, tomatoes, and other garden produce. These families were able to maintain financial independence in part due to owning a number of mules, chickens, pigs, and milk cows (Carson Nichols 1986, pers. comm.; Kenneth Stine 1986, pers. comm.; see also U.S. Bureau of Census 1880b, Iredell County). Incidentally, the high monetary value of mules is described in detail elsewhere (Clark 1946:39-43; Wright 1986:119-120.) The families also believed in helping others and were engaged in a reciprocal exchange of labor over the course of two generations (Carson Nichols 1986, pers. comm.; Kenneth Stine 1986, pers.

comm.). Further income was generated through occasional carpentry and lumber-related jobs. Members of these families recall that both were poor enough to have barely noticed the effects of the Depression. Nevertheless, both were able to grow, collect, process, and can enough foodstuffs for their families' needs. They were also able to maintain ownership of their land across two generations.

The material culture of the Harmony area was created by local residents who were firmly planted in the Upland South tradition. Many goods were produced by farm families, both for home use and sale or trade to others. For example, some area residents, the Nichols and Stines included, were called upon to help build houses. Others were asked to construct furniture or produce pottery. Skills in animal husbandry and veterinary medicine were recognized and appreciated by members of the community. Curt Nichols was well respected for treating his neighbors' animals for illness and for his knowledge of planting "signs." James Stine was noted for his agility with a saw and hammer, and also for his kindness to others. Although poor and of different races, these men were respected for specific personal qualities. Their wives were well regarded for keeping their homes clean and their children fed, helping in the fields, and for aiding those in need. These women were also engaged in a local network of quilting. Both embroidery and quilts were used to make home life more aesthetically pleasing (Carson Nichols 1986, pers. comm.; Margaret Prekler 1987, pers. comm.; Betty Hendrix 1987, pers. comm.; Kenneth Stine 1987, pers. comm.).

As members of these families were well known in Harmony, they could have received credit at nearby Shaw Store. The Shaws sold food staples, harnesses, and work clothing throughout the early decades of this century. They would charge one price for goods, whether purchased with cash or on credit (Carrie Shaw 1987, pers. comm.). If low on cash, local residents could also barter for goods at the other area store, Gaither's. Mr. Gaither would not offer any credit and dealt on a cash or barter basis only (John Gaither 1987, pers. comm.). Local farmers could bring him eggs, meat, canned

goods, or herbs to trade for manufactured items. Gaither sold an incredible variety of goods, ranging from slop jars to ceramics, and from mule harnesses to plow parts.

Throughout the early decades of the 20th century, the Stines and Nicholse purchased many items from the Shaw and Gaither stores. They bought staples such as coffee and sugar, as well as canning jars and harnesses. Mass-produced items were also available through mail-order catalogs. Family members occasionally drove to the relatively large county seat of Statesville, where they could sell lumber and purchase items needed for the farm (Carson Nichols 1986, pers. comm.; Margaret Prekler 1987, pers. comm.; Betty Hendrix 1987, pers. comm.; Kenneth Stine 1987, pers. comm.).

The Stine and Nichols farmsteads were more alike than different. Although the Stines lived in an I-house and the Nicholse in a hall-and-parlor house, both were made of balloon framing resting on fieldstone piers. Each house had two porches, one front, and one to the side. These structures were initially built to face the road and were similar in design, having a central hall, with two rooms balanced on either side. The Nicholse had a comparatively fancier front door and a hall with box-car-siding decorative construction; the Stines had two stories and an artistic staircase design. Both homes had a back ell, with one larger room followed by a smaller one with associated side bay. The Nicholse had more fireplaces and more ornate, curvilinear mantles. The Stines' home, however, had more floor space at 2,163 sq. ft. than that of the Nichols home at 1,412 sq. ft. The Nichols family apparently invested more in architectural elements—decorative mantles, doors, hall, and more chimneys—than their neighbors, while the Stines invested more in floor space. The downstairs floor plans of the two farmhouses were mirror images and were almost the same size, the Stine house being about 47 sq. ft. larger than the Nichols building. The Stine home had an additional 704 sq. ft. upstairs.

During the late 19th to 20th centuries, many black and white rural farmers lived in similar types of homes. Differences in building sizes, at the



scale of the individual farmhouse, do not seem to be the result of ethnic factors. Obviously, it would have cost more to build larger structures, both in terms of time and costs of materials. This cost factor is probably why the few landlords in the Harmony area built one-story, new homes for most of their tenants (John Gaither 1987, pers. comm.). Elsewhere in the Piedmont, tenants occasionally lived in older, two-story homes that were no longer inhabited by members of the owners' families (Hagood 1977[1939]:92–93).

Rural families, regardless of status or class strata, apparently coped with whatever space they had available. Hagood (1977[1939]:93), for instance, found that most bedrooms were occupied by more than one person, and that other rooms often served multiple functions. This same pattern was found among black tenants in Maryland (McDaniel 1982). If two rooms existed upstairs, one would be occupied by the children, the other by their parents. If an extended family was present, or if the family was much larger than typical, downstairs rooms could serve as additional bedrooms. This was a common situation, and in many cases "the side room doubled as the parents' bedroom" (McDaniel 1982:27).

Such was the case for both the Stine and Nichols families. Family sizes were comparable, ranging from six to eight plus visitors at any one time (L. Stine 1989:Appendices A, B). The Nichols parents used the middle room of the house—the first large room of the ell—as their bedroom. During the day this room served as the living room. Their children, separated by gender, slept in the front two rooms. Visitors joined in this dormitory-like arrangement. By comparison, the Stine parents slept in a separate upstairs bedroom, with their youngest child in the room with them. The second upstairs room was reserved for the other children. The grandfather slept downstairs in the living room, and guests stayed either in the front parlor or shared with Stine family members (Carson Nichols 1986, pers. comm.; Margaret Prekler 1987, pers. comm.; Betty Hendrix 1987, pers. comm.; Kenneth Stine 1987, pers. comm.).

At a regional scale, the material culture of Harmony and environs was varied, but the range of

variation of structures was not very large (Little-Stokes 1978). Houses, outbuildings, stores, mills, and other features of the landscape occasionally represented social and sometimes economic status differentiation.

Institutional architecture in Harmony was indicative of racial inequality, especially in the case of schools. The local "colored" school was a small frame building, still extant, which contrasts sharply with the imposing brick edifice built for the local white children to attend. This dichotomy in building types was reflective of differential access to funds (Keever 1976). The majority of standing churches are small and of simple frame construction. The large brick church in the town of Harmony is Methodist, not A.M.E. Black and white graveyards do appear to share many characteristics typical for the region. However, one black graveyard surveyed appeared to have some African-American characteristics—e.g., use of "temporary" markers, grassless graves, and broken ceramics and glass on the graves (Connor 1987; L. Stine 1989:Chapter 5).

For the most part area farmstead facades would not help an outsider predict a family's wealth, social status, or ethnic background. Having a single—as opposed to a double-story home does not seem to have suggested lesser status or class position. Having unkempt homes, yards, and fields, however, did help neighbors stratify others into lower positions on the social scale (Hagood 1977[1939]:86, 148; Daniel 1985:67).

Harmony farmers were able to purchase the same types of goods at the same stores. Most farmers were able to buy goods on credit, using cash crops as collateral, but many preferred to pay cash. Cash-poor farmers could barter using farm produce or wild herbs. While access to goods may have been the same, actual choices as to types and styles may have differed. These possible differences in the portable aspects of farm material culture should be apparent in the archaeological record. Area residents may have been using, reusing, and disposing of their material items in selective, unconscious ways.

To summarize, the two farms were inhabited by about the same numbers of people from the same

economic class. The heads of these families had garnered much respect in the community for their hard work, assistance to neighbors, and special knowledge of agricultural practices. Both the Stine and Nichols families held a relatively high position in terms of community social strata in spite of their relative poverty and, in the case of the Nicholse, their race.

### Interpretation of Archaeological Data

Archaeological research was undertaken at the Stine and Nichols farmsteads. A grid was placed at both sites, and 10- $\times$ -10-ft. surface units were 100% collected. As surface visibility varied at both sites from approximately 30–100%, a metal detector survey was used to augment surface collections. Results of this analysis were used to create artifact distribution maps, based on South's (1977) functional groups. These data were used in conjunction with an examination of the relationship of existing structures to determine placement of 5  $\times$  5 ft. judgmental units in areas predicted to have the greatest concentration of artifacts and probable features. South's (1979) and Bruseth and Moir's (1987) previous discussions of expected distributions of farmstead middens were used to stratify both sites.

Each site was divided into two major areas for probabilistic sampling: the predicted Active Yard, consisting of all areas within 40 ft. of the respective main houses; and the Remaining Yard areas, consisting of the rest of the farmstead cores. Both the Active and Remaining Yards were then tested with a series of 1- $\times$ -1-ft. test units, based on a random numbers table for each yard. This sampling design was used to allow for the statistical comparison of results between respective yards at a single site, as well as for the comparison of yards and totals at the Nichols and Stine farms. Units that revealed features were then expanded into 5- $\times$ -5-ft. excavation units. Twenty-two test units were placed at the Nichols farm, and 37 at the Stine site (18 1- $\times$ -1-ft. units and four 5- $\times$ -5-ft. units at Nichols; 26 1- $\times$ -1-ft. units and 11 5- $\times$ -5-ft. units at Stine).

TABLE 4-5  
MINIMUM CERAMIC VESSEL COUNTS BY  
FORM AND SITE

Vessel	Stine		Nichols	
	N	%	N	%
Flowerpot	1	3.23	2	9.09
Crock	5	16.13	4	18.18
Bowl/cup	6	19.35	5	22.73
Saucer	4	12.90	3	13.64
Plate	13	41.94	6	27.27
Unknown	2	6.45	2	9.09
Total	31	100.00	22	100.00

A total assemblage of 4,263 identifiable artifacts was uncovered from the Nichols site, and 862 artifacts were recovered from the Stine farm. These artifacts were analyzed by artifact type, class, and group (adapted from South 1977). Ceramic sherds from the Nichols ( $n = 68$ ) and Stine ( $n = 126$ ) farmsteads were significantly different using a Chi-square test of association:  $\chi^2 = 52.82$ , *d.f.* 4,  $p < .05$ . The Stines had more plain whiteware sherds, the Nicholse more flowerpots and stonewares. The Nicholse had a higher percentage of decorated whiteware, the Stines more porcelain. Comparison of artifacts by decorated and undecorated minimum vessel counts did not yield a similarly significant result (Phi coefficient test = 0.227). Differential sherd breakage rates may account for the ceramic relationship established using the Chi-square test.

The Nichols site yielded a minimum of 22 ceramic vessels, the Stine farm, 31 (L. Stine 1989: 390–394). Nichols had a ratio of 23 percent hollowware (excluding crocks) to 27 percent plates, while Stine had 19 percent hollowware versus 42 percent plates (Table 4–5). The Nichols site had slightly fewer numbers of all vessel forms than the Stine site. This trend does not suggest some type of dietary difference, however, which might be inferred if the Stines had a much higher percentage of plates and the Nicholse of bowls (cf. Otto 1975, 1977). Such was the case at black tenant sites at Waverly Plantation, Mississippi, for example, where researchers found that tenants had an average of 58.5 percent plates and 15.7 percent bowls (Adams 1980:275).

The relative ratios of specific artifact classes were figured for each yard and each site and may be compared with data for several artifact patterns. Data are summarized by functional group in Table 4–6. The Stine percentages reflect a similar artifact pattern. The Nichols Remaining Yard data stand apart, however. This distinction is more likely due to the presence of a large soap-making and trash feature that was partially excavated and contained a high number of architectural items, mostly nails. Both oral and documentary evidence suggest that old structural boards with nails attached often served as fuel for making soap or burning trash (L. Stine 1989). When the feature totals are removed for the Nichols data, the artifact ratios fall within a similar range between yards and between sites (Table 4–6). These results were not anticipated; a greater number of artifacts was expected in the immediate vicinity of the farmhouses, with perhaps a greater variety of types found in their outer yard area.

These data may serve to illustrate a danger of using artifact patterns. The comparison of percentages with other published patterns reveals that initially the Stine data seem to fit most closely with an 18th-century slave pattern. The unadjusted Nichols numbers are closer to those found for tenants and yeoman farmers (Table 4–6). If these patterns had been reversed, it would have been all too easy to suggest that the Nichols site ratios fit with the Lowcountry slave pattern due to a shared ethnicity. As has been aptly discussed elsewhere (e.g., South 1988; Joseph 1989; Orser 1989), archaeologists have been eager to use raw data to develop a great number of “patterns,” which then are used to compare data from sites that have different functions, chronology, and geographic locations. The actual meaning of similarities in Table 4–6 is not clear. Frankly, chance could account for most of the percentage range similarities between the sites (see L. Stine 1989).

Pattern analysis can serve to highlight artifact distributions at and between sites if used with caution as a preliminary, descriptive step in analysis. The use of patterning for testing general cultural processes is difficult and must be predicated on controlling for specific variables such as methods,

amount of site excavated, region, and time period. In the present study, many variables were similar. The field methods used at both the Stine and Nichols sites were the same. As discussed above, other social, economic, and geographic variables were also held in common. One geographic factor that differed was topography, and it proved to have an important affect on site formation and post-depositional processes.

The Stine site has been moderately affected by erosion. Natural weathering on the knoll has been augmented by cultural practices such as plowing within 40 ft. of the main house. The Nichols farm core was not plowed, and erosional processes were less severe on this relatively flat site. As a result, the Nichols site contained better preservation of features. The greater density of Nichols artifacts is most likely a result of differential preservation, not differential acquisition. The slight differences in the artifact group distributions at the two sites appear to be the result of natural, more than cultural, formation processes.

In various Chi-square tests of association, no significant differences were found between the entire assemblages at the two sites (L. Stine 1989: 390–408). Slight variations could be attributed to either sampling error or the effects of post-depositional influences on the sites.

In the future, these types of sites probably should be excavated using a different type of sampling design. The present case demonstrated that no significant difference existed between Active and Remaining Yard distributions—except for the soap feature’s effect. The horizontal distribution of sheet middens and features and their relationship to specific activities could be better determined using an alternative method of stratification. The use of random units within a standard larger-sized block, such as a series of 50- × 50-ft. sampling squares, would be preferable (Bruseth and Moir 1987). The artifact distributions within each block could then be compared.

The methods used in this study, nonetheless, have allowed comparison of material culture by functional group and by class. No major differences were found between the actual types of artifacts in the Nichols and Stine assemblages. Ce-

TABLE 4-6  
COMPARISON OF ARTIFACT PATTERNS BY FUNCTIONAL GROUP (PERCENTAGES)

Provenience	Kitchen	Architectural	Furniture	Arms	Clothing	Personal	Activities	Pipes
18th-century Carolina Artifact Pattern <sup>1</sup>	59.51	27.58	0.35	0.19	2.95	0.29	1.34	7.80
18th-century Slave Pattern <sup>2</sup>	77.39	17.81	0.07	0.17	0.49	0.05	0.51	3.53
19th-century Slave Pattern <sup>3</sup>	24.30	70.80	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.10	0.30	0.00
19th-century South Carolina Piedmont Tenant Pattern <sup>4</sup>	72.30	22.10	0.00	0.00	1.50	0.30	3.80	0.00
19th-century South Carolina Piedmont and Yeoman Pattern <sup>5</sup>	45.10	50.00	0.40	0.00	1.80	0.40	1.80	0.00
19th/20th-century Piedmont Yeoman Pattern <sup>6</sup>	60.70	36.70	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.50	1.00	0.00
20th-century Tenant Pattern <sup>7</sup>	40.07	54.11	0.69	0.69	3.08	0.00	3.77	0.00
19th/20th-century Piedmont Yeoman Pattern <sup>8</sup>	32.77	34.24	0.00	0.63	26.05	0.00	5.88	4.00
Nichols, total artifacts	38.68	52.38	0.12	0.49	2.21	0.40	5.72	0.00
Nichols, without feature fill	78.14	14.38	0.06	0.87	0.58	0.70	5.28	0.00
Nichols, Active Yard	78.91	13.66	0.06	0.90	0.60	0.72	5.15	0.00
Nichols, Remaining Yard without feature fill	55.36	35.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.93	0.00
Nichols, Remaining Yard with feature fill	12.80	77.30	0.15	0.23	3.24	0.19	6.09	0.00
Stine, total artifacts	80.16	12.30	0.70	1.04	0.93	0.23	4.64	0.00
Stine, Active Yard	71.59	22.73	0.00	1.14	1.14	0.00	3.41	0.00
Stine, Remaining Yard	81.14	11.11	0.78	1.03	0.90	0.26	4.78	0.00

<sup>1</sup>South (1977) as revised by Wheaton et al. (1983:271, 285)

<sup>2</sup>Wheaton et al. (1983)

<sup>3</sup>Resnick (1984); Drucker et al. (1984)

<sup>4</sup>Trinkley and Caballero (1983)

<sup>5</sup>Drucker et al. (1984)

<sup>6</sup>Resnick (1984)

<sup>7</sup>Stine et al. (1987)

<sup>8</sup>Wheaton and Reed (1987)

amics have already been discussed. When compared, variations in relative site glass types and decorative motifs also proved as likely due to chance as to deliberate differential purchase (L. Stine 1989:325).

Although statistical tests indicate that no significant variation is present between the two assemblages, some variation does exist. The differences in numbers of artifacts from the Stine and Nichols sites have primarily been attributed to the effect of different topography and erosional effects. The slight differences in the actual types of artifacts found at the two sites may prove more interesting if compared with similar data from a greater number of regional farmstead sites. By using different statistical tests, such as discriminate analysis, researchers may uncover regularities at a larger scale of analysis than is apparent at the site level.

Archaeological investigations, as well as oral and documentary research, reveal that Stine and Nichols material culture was not very different, suggesting that ethnic factors did not play an important role in the procurement, use, and reuse of material items on these two particular farms, in this specific region. Indeed, the material culture at these two sites was much more alike than different and appears to reflect similarities in occupational and economic factors of stratification—e.g., economic stratum—more than ethnic differences—e.g., status stratum.

### Summary and Conclusions

Agrarian sites were not simply settled by black tenants or white owners. Twentieth-century rural sites were farmed by blacks and whites whose po-

sitions on the agricultural ladder tended to rise and fall with varied circumstances. In some cases the range of variation between owner and tenant was not very great. This variability, however, was probably both region-specific and dependent upon the particular manifestation of the agricultural ladder. In the Harmony area, for example, many farmers worked for themselves, and few tenants were employed. The material culture in the region concomitantly reflects Harmony's truncated stratification system.

At a regional scale, the institutionalized landscape reflected racial inequality as well as ethnicity—e.g., schools, graveyards. At the scale of the Harmony community, nonportable material culture appears to have varied only slightly, within a locally acceptable range. For example, most agriculturalists lived in frame hall-and-parlor or I-houses. Both the form and style of privately-owned buildings have no direct correlation with either ethnic choice or occupational ranking. In one case a landlord preferred to build one-story houses for his tenants to help save money. In other cases tenants lived in owners' former I-houses. Building a one- as opposed to two-story home appears to have been an individual choice related to cost.

Oral testimonies from past site inhabitants and store owners have been combined with the results of archaeological investigation. Research supports the view that portable items did not differ significantly between area black and white farmers from the same economic stratum.

Aspects of social and class strata have been explored from both a theoretical and a case-study perspective. Social stratification in the early through mid-20th-century agrarian world was complex. Some aspects of stratification had direct material correlates, some were more indirect. Ethnic factors do not seem to have had direct impact on site formation at the Nichols and the Stine farmsteads. Economic variables were important in determining access to goods and ability to purchase them. In Harmony, at least, blacks and whites had similarly equal economic opportunities. Racial distinctions do not seem to have been made at neighborhood stores. In fact, the only community members who may have found it hard to purchase goods were those deemed "crooked," slovenly, or lazy, regardless of class, occupation, or racial categorization. The economic ramifications of racism were somewhat ameliorated by personal, face-to-face interaction.

Archaeologists cannot excavate social inequality. Archaeologists can, however, discover direct and indirect effects of social stratification within a community. Material culture correlates that may be ambiguous at one scale of analysis may be clear at another. The archaeology of early 20th-century farm sites is not simple. Relationships are much more complex, both between community members and between material culture and stratification. This complexity provides an important challenge for archaeologists.