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The Historical Archaeology of Eighteenth-Century Tenancy at the Snowden Park Site (44SP0642)

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Cover Page Footnote

The data recovery at the Snowden Park Site was completed in association with the Virginia Department of Transportation's Fall Hill Avenue and Mary Washington Boulevard Extension Project (State Project Number U000-111-233; UPC 88699; Federal Project Number STP 5A01(181)). We wish to thank a number of individuals who have contributed to the research presented in this article. Elizabeth Moore identified portions of the faunal assemblage from the site, Justine McKnight identified the ethnobotanical remains, and Andrew Wilkins performed the soil chemical analysis. Thanks are due to Eric Deetz for sharing data from the Phase II excavations at this site as well as Mara Kaktins for sharing her research on ceramic mending and Lauren McMillan for helping with the identification of the clay tobacco pipes. We also deeply appreciate the willingness of Dovetail, Kerri Barile and Mike Carmody in particular, to allow us to explore our research interests related to this site. Thanks also to the two anonymous peer reviewers as well as Emily Calhoun for their comments that have ultimately made this a stronger piece of research. Finally, any errors in fact or interpretation are entirely our responsibility.

The Historical Archaeology of Eighteenth-Century Tenancy at the Snowden Park Site (44SP0642), Fredericksburg, Virginia

D. Brad Hatch and Kerry González

Archaeological excavations at the Snowden Park site (44SP0642), conducted by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group in June 2014, revealed evidence of a late 18th-century tenant farmstead on the outskirts of Fredericksburg. The tenant status of the site occupants, the McCoy family, gathered from historical records, provided the opportunity to interpret the material culture recovered during the excavation in the context of 18th-century tenancy. How did the archaeological remains at this site relate to other contemporary sites in the region? Were there material manifestations of tenancy that could be recognized? Comparison of the landscape and recovered materials to those of other 18th-century sites in the Chesapeake revealed that pinpointing tenant sites based solely upon archaeological remains is a difficult task. However, focusing on specific archaeological remains and patterns while highlighting the known tenant status of the occupants allowed for a more nuanced interpretation of the lives of the members of McCoy family.

Les fouilles archéologiques sur le site de Snowden Park (44SP0642), menées par Dovetail Cultural Resource Group en juin 2014, ont révélé des évidences d'une ferme de fermiers de la fin du XVIIIe siècle à la périphérie de Fredericksburg. Le statut de locataire des occupants du site, la famille McCoy, recueilli à partir de documents historiques, a permis d'interpréter la culture matérielle récupérée lors des fouilles dans le contexte des locataires au XVIIIe siècle. Quel est le lien entre les vestiges archéologiques de ce site et les autres sites contemporains de la région? Y a-t-il des manifestations matérielles des locataires qui pourraient être reconnues? La comparaison du paysage et des matériaux récupérés avec ceux d'autres sites du XVIIIe siècle dans le Chesapeake a révélé que la localisation des sites locataires basée uniquement sur des vestiges archéologiques est une tâche difficile. Cependant, se concentrer sur des vestiges et des modèles archéologiques spécifiques tout en mettant en évidence le statut de locataire connu des occupants a permis une interprétation plus nuancée de la vie des membres de la famille McCoy.

Introduction

In 2014 Dovetail Cultural Resource Group conducted archaeological excavations at the Snowden Park site (44SP0642), a mid-18th-through early 19th-century farmstead in Fredericksburg, Virginia (FIG. 1). Excavation and subsequent specialized studies of the archaeological and archival data showed that the Snowden Park site was a small farmstead in the semi-rural countryside surrounding Fredericksburg occupied by tenants from ca. 1761–1795. This article focuses on the material conditions of tenants in the late 18th-century Chesapeake region, using the Snowden Park site as an example. We first examine the history of ownership of the site, then offer a brief outline of the excavation of the site, and a discussion of the tenant experience in the Chesapeake to provide context for the archaeological findings. Finally, we interpret selected

aspects of the material culture from the site, focusing on their relationship to the tenancy. Through this analysis we show that tenants are difficult to recognize using archaeological remains alone. Rather, the construction of a detailed historical context for artifacts at tenant sites allows for more nuanced interpretations of the material and social conditions of tenancy in the late-18th century.

Site History

The first substantive effort to settle the region surrounding the site occurred in 1714 with the establishment of Alexander Spotswood's Germanna colony (Barile 2004). In an effort to increase settlements the Virginia Governor's Council began offering free land to any new patent seekers that submitted claims before May 1, 1728 (Hatch et al. 2014). Historic records indicate that the Snowden Park site

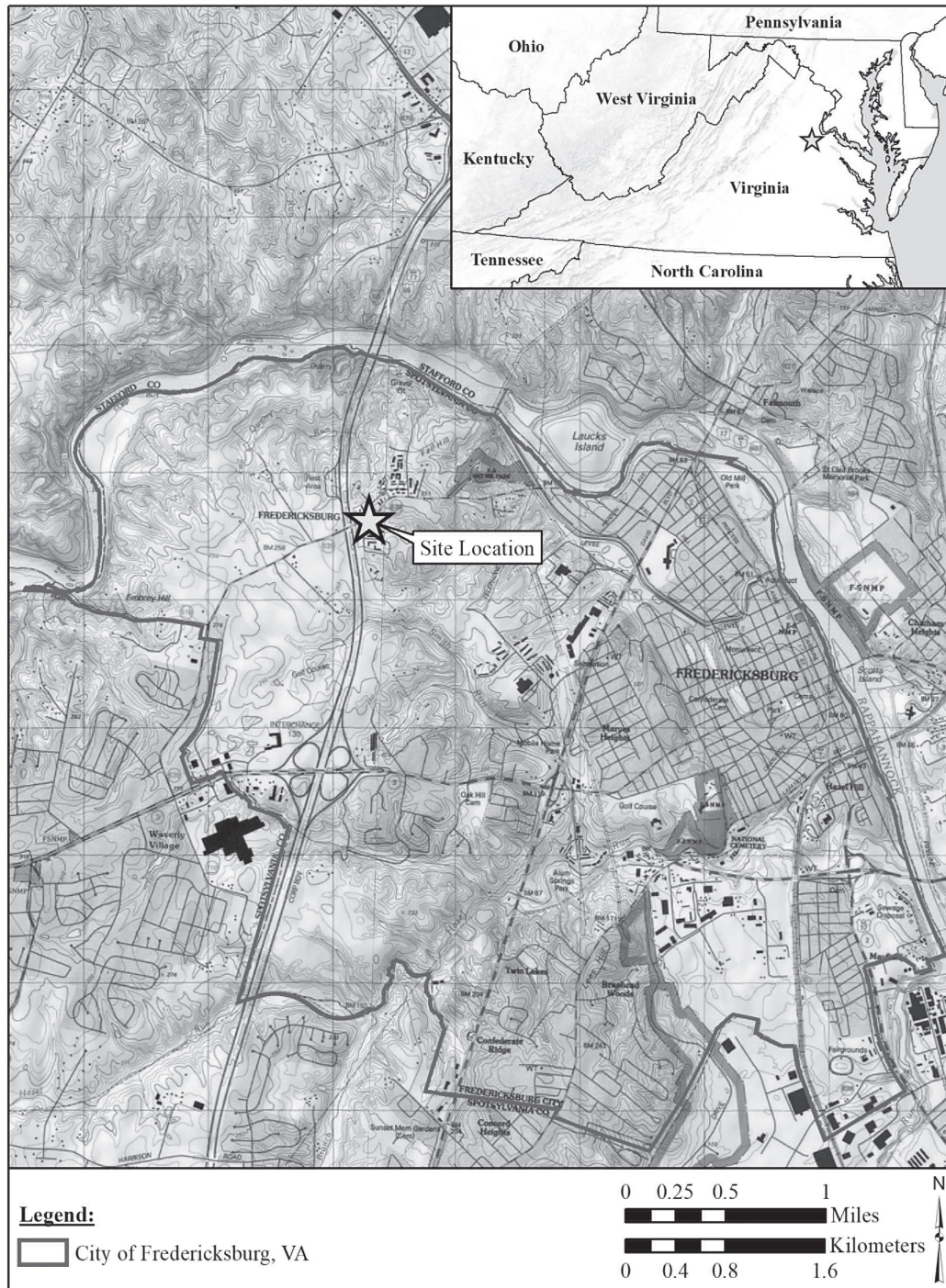


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the Snowden Park site and the City of Fredericksburg in Virginia on the Fredericksburg, Virginia 7.5-Minute Topographic Quadrangle. (Base map: Esri [2020], United States Geological Survey; map by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2020.)

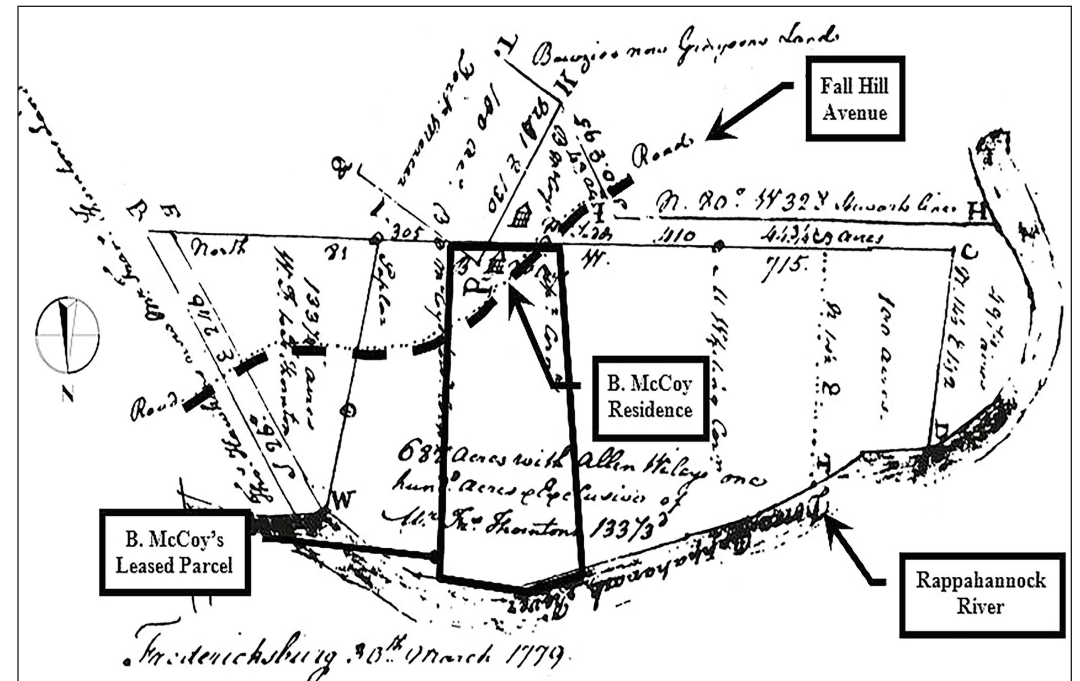


Figure 2. A 1779 plat map of the Fall Hill Tract, showing the boundaries of subdivided and adjoining parcels. (Map: SCDB 1779: 438; modifications by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2020.)

was first occupied after 1733 and was inhabited for around thirty years, from the 1760s to the 1790s, by the McCoy family. In 1733 Susannah Livingston and two partners leased the parcel on which the Snowden Park site is situated for an annual payment of 500 lb. of tobacco. However, it is unclear from historical records whether the site was occupied at this time (Spotsylvania County Deed Book [SCDB] 1733: 497). Susannah Livingston died in 1745, and her will makes no mention of any outstanding lease arrangements (Spotsylvania County Will Book 1745: 8). The first direct reference in the historical record to any substantial occupation at the Snowden Park site comes in 1767 from a deed recorded in Spotsylvania County conveying a lease on 20 ac. from William Fitzhugh and Benjamin Grymes to a Benjamin McCoy. As described in the deed, the conveyance also included a house “where James Lindsey lately lived on the lot formerly granted Susanna Livingston” (Spotsylvania County Deed Book [SCDB] 1767: 107). The “James Lindsey” referred to in the deed was likely James Lindsay, Jr. (1740–ca. 1782), who may have been in residence as early as

1760–1761 (when he would have turned 21, reaching the age of majority). Unfortunately, no additional historical information concerning Lindsay or his possible occupation of the site has been found to date.

The McCoy tenure on the property is further evidenced by a plat map of the tract drawn and recorded in 1779 (SCDB 1779: 438) (FIG. 2). The map shows the boundaries of each subdivided parcel, built elements, and the rough alignment of a road that extended through the southeast portion of the larger tract (present-day Fall Hill Avenue). The plat map also depicts a section of road (present-day Fall Hill Avenue) and two standing buildings. The northernmost building, with “McCoy” inscribed next to it, is situated near the southern boundary of a 100 ac. (40.5 ha) parcel leased to Benjamin McCoy in 1773, acquired after his 1767 20-ac. lease (SCDB 1773: 388). Historical records provide very few details concerning McCoy’s tenure on the property. He was reportedly a “shoemaker, sadler” by trade (SCDB 1774: 522) and lived on the property with his family. The 1773 deed of lease acquired from Fitzhugh stipulated it was

for “the life” of McCoy, his wife, Kezia, and their son, James, but it is not entirely clear who else, such as enslaved laborers or other family members, may have resided at the site around this time (Crozier 1955: 302; SCDB 1773: 388).

Following the end of the McCoy family’s tenure in the mid-1790s, when the interest in the property was sold by Benjamin’s daughter, Kezia, the historical record provides few details concerning either the current site area’s subsequent occupation or final disposition. A survey map produced in ca. 1820 documenting the physiography and built improvements along the Rappahannock River identifies the Fall Hill Estate (occupied by “Dr. Taylor”) and several other buildings in the general vicinity, but shows no standing buildings in or near the site (Corporation Commission 1820).

Archaeology at the Snowden Park Site

Dovetail’s archaeological investigations focused on the 46 × 52 ft. (14.0 × 15.8 m) 18th-

century core of the site identified during previous archaeological studies (E. Deetz et al. 2012). In total, 49 features were identified (FIG. 3), which included both modern and historical features comprising postholes, post molds, plow scars, a borrow pit, and various other yard features. Of the identified features on the site, 29 were sampled through excavation. Features that were suspected of being historical and likely to produce data significant to the interpretation of the site were prioritized, and all were excavated. Excavated features included a borrow pit, a roasting pit, and seven postholes and post molds, among others.

At least two buildings were discovered at the site, both of which were constructed using the post-in-ground method (Carson et al. 1981). Structural posts were identified based upon their size and depth. Structural post molds were all round and ranged in diameter from 0.7 to 0.8 ft. (20 to 25 cm), with depths

ranging from 1.5 to 1.8 ft. (47 to 54 cm). The corresponding postholes were all roughly rectangular in shape with long axes from 3.1 to 3.7 ft. (94 to 112 cm) in length and short axes from 2.0 to 3.0 ft. (60 to 90 cm) in length. The postholes ranged in depth from 1.6 to 2.0 ft. (50 to 60 cm).

Features 2, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 54 represent the remains of a building that measured 15.5 ft. (4.72 m) on the short axis and at least 7.6 ft. (2.30 m), and likely more, on the long axis (FIG. 3). The full extent of the long axis could not be definitively determined due to the limits of excavation. Another post mold, represented by Feature 41, is probably not part of the original iteration of the building, due to its alignment, but instead represents an addition.

While only the eastern end of the building was exposed during excavation, it is probable that this building functioned as the main dwelling at the site, based on its comparison to other tenant dwellings and the artifact assemblage associated with it. If the building did function as a dwelling, the overall dimensions can be predicted with some degree of certainty. In her survey of 169 dwellings listed for sale in the *Virginia Gazette* between 1736 and 1780, Camille Wells (1993: 9) found that approxi-

mately 46% measured 16 × 32 ft. (4.9 × 9.8 m) or smaller, with 16 × 20 ft. (4.9 × 6.1 m) being the most common size. Judging from her data and the spacing of the posts, the dwelling at the Snowden Park site would have measured either 15.5 × 22.7 ft. (4.7 × 6.9 m) or 15.5 × 30.2 ft. (4.7 × 9.2 m).

An examination of archaeological sites representing dwellings occupied throughout the 18th century and into the 19th also helps to determine how large the dwelling at Snowden Park might have been (TAB.1). Although the sample is small, it does reveal that, for the period, dwellings varied widely in size and construction materials. When viewed in relation to the homes of middling planters and freeholders, the building at the Snowden Park site would have been small. However, when compared with the houses of other tenants and plantation laborers, who made up the majority of the Chesapeake population in the 18th century, the dwelling at this site would not have been unusually small.

The dwelling would probably have been divided into at least two rooms on the ground floor with a half-story or loft above (Wells 1993: 6–7). No physical evidence for a hearth was found at the eastern end of the building,

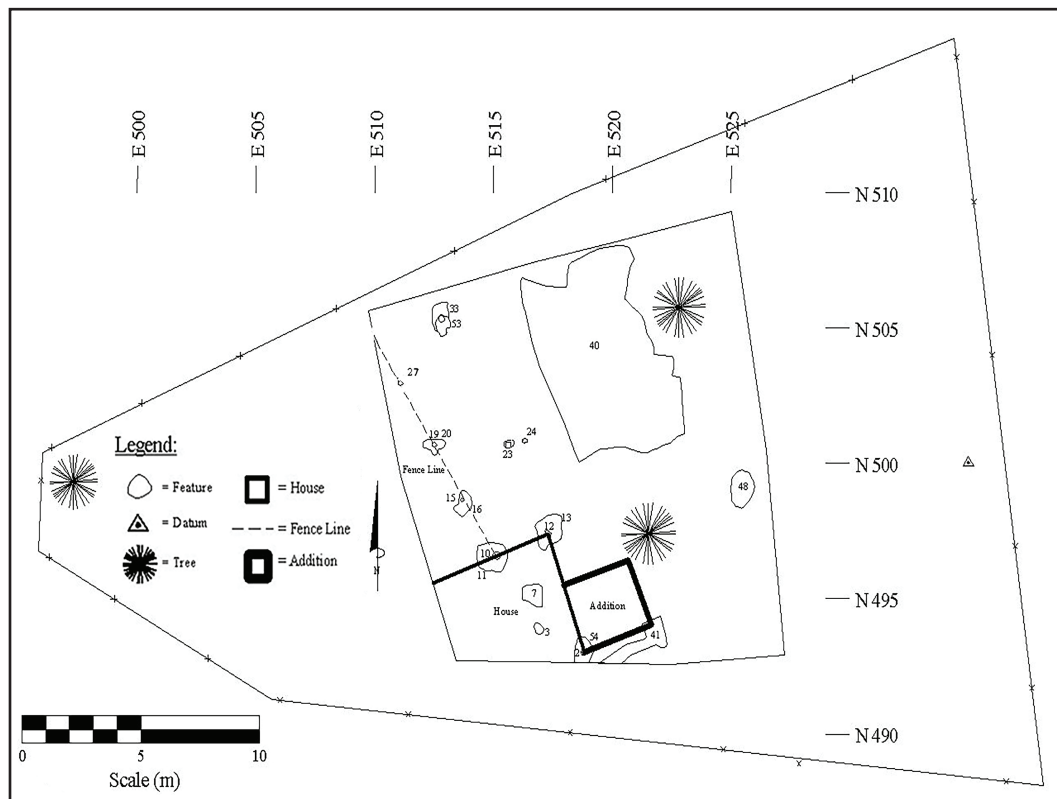


Figure 3. Overall plan of the Snowden Park site, showing building locations and the fence line. (Figure by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2014.)

Table 1. Sample of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Dwellings in Virginia

Site	Date	Status	Foundation	Dimensions (ft)	Citation
Snowden Park Site	1767–1795	Tenant	Earthfast	15.5 × 22.7 or 30.2	Hatch et al. 2014
Washington House (44ST0174)	1727–1779	Upper Middling Planter	Stone	27 × 52	Muraca et al. 2010
Maurice Clark House (44ST0174)	1694–1727	Small Freeholder	Earthfast	20 × 30	Hatch 2015; Muraca et al. 2006
Henry Brooks Site (44WM0205)	1700–1729	Tenant	Brick	19 × 20	Blades 1979; Hatch 2015
Clifts (44WM0033)	1670–1735	Wealthy Tenant	Earthfast	18.5 × 41	Hatch 2015; Neiman 1980
Newman’s Neck (44NB0180)	1670–1747	Upper Middling Planter	Earthfast	20 × 40	Hatch 2015; Heath et al. 2009
Stratford Hall Overseer (Oval Site)	1740–1800	Overseer	Earthfast	16 × 20	Sanford 2012; Wilkins 2015, 2017
Stewart-Watkins (Monticello)	1800–1810	Skilled Plantation Laborer	Stone	18 × 24	Heath 1991, 1999
Structure 10 (Utopia II)	1700–1725	Enslaved	Earthfast	16 × 32	Fesler 2004

but there is a strong likelihood that one existed on the unexposed western end, since a dwelling would have required a heat source. The low amount of brick recovered during the excavations suggest that a brick hearth was not present in this dwelling. Indeed, 63% of the buildings advertised in the *Virginia Gazette* between 1736 and 1780 were made entirely of wood, and only 28% of the buildings had some sort of masonry feature, such as a chimney (Wells 1993: 11). During the 18th century, post-in-ground construction and wattle and daub chimneys remained the norm for most people living in Virginia (Wells 1993: 12).

The artifacts recovered from the three postholes and post molds associated with the possible dwelling indicate that the building was constructed after 1762. The presence of artifacts in the postholes suggests that the site might have been occupied shortly before the construction of this building, probably by James Lindsay. It is quite likely, judging from the 1762 *terminus post quem* (TPQ) of these features, that this building was constructed soon after Benjamin McCoy leased the land in 1767, possibly as the dwelling that he and his family inhabited. Interestingly, the ethnobotanical analysis of Feature 10 showed that the post had rotted, indicating that the building may have been in very poor condition by the time the site was abandoned around 1795 (McKnight 2014: 8).

The two remaining structural posts on the site, denoted by Features 41, 33, and 53, may represent an outbuilding (Features 33 and 53) and an addition to the dwelling (Feature 41). The nature of Feature 41, with a ditch that cuts through it, is somewhat enigmatic. It appears to be a structural post floating in space. If it is a structural post, then it would have served as a post for an addition to the dwelling rather than as a structural member of another building. Calculating a hypotenuse using Features 12, 2, and the post mold in Feature 41 yielded a result of 17.5 ft. (5.33 m), which was fairly close to the real measurement, 18.5 ft. (5.65 m), between Feature 12 and the post mold in Feature 41. While the measurements do not match as well in this case as they did with the posts in the core of the dwelling, the fact that it was added after the main construction effort may help to explain why it was not perfectly square, suggesting that the core of

the dwelling may have shifted or settled over time. The matching post for Feature 41 was likely in the unexcavated portion of the site, and a portion of it may have been identified in the field as Feature 50 but not excavated. If Feature 41 does represent an addition, it would have measured approximately 7.7 × 8.1 ft. (2.36 × 2.48 m) and joined the eastern gable end at the center of the wall.

Feature 41 had a TPQ of 1775, indicating that the addition was constructed well after the main building had gone up. The 1775 TPQ corresponds well with the death of Benjamin McCoy in 1782. The change in leaseholder from Benjamin to his wife, Kezia, based on the original terms of the lease, may have acted as the impetus for the construction of the addition. Although, determining why Kezia might have needed an addition during her widowhood would be speculative, it may have been related to family members or servants moving into the dwelling with her as she aged.

The posthole and postmold represented by Features 33 and 53 represent another unknown building that was located north and west of the site. Plowzone artifact distributions provide little clue as to the purpose of this building, since it existed mostly outside of the sampled area. Without a wall dimension or other architectural evidence, the interpretation of the function of this building is unclear. Some possibilities, as delineated in 18th-century *Virginia Gazette* advertisements, include a slave quarter, a barn, a tobacco house, or a kitchen (Wells 1993). The 1762 TPQ for the construction of this feature indicates that it was built around the same time as the building to the south, when the leasehold went to Benjamin McCoy.

Another major landscape feature discovered at the Snowden Park site was a fence line near the western edge of the excavated area. The full extent of the fence is unknown, but it appears to originate along the northern facade of the dwelling, and runs in a northerly direction. The generally small sizes and shallow depths of these posts indicate that they functioned as fence posts rather than structural elements (Features 15, 16, 19, and 20). While no fence posts were excavated to the north of Features 19 and 20, the northernmost fencepost, it does appear that one may have been identified but not excavated. Feature 27 was a

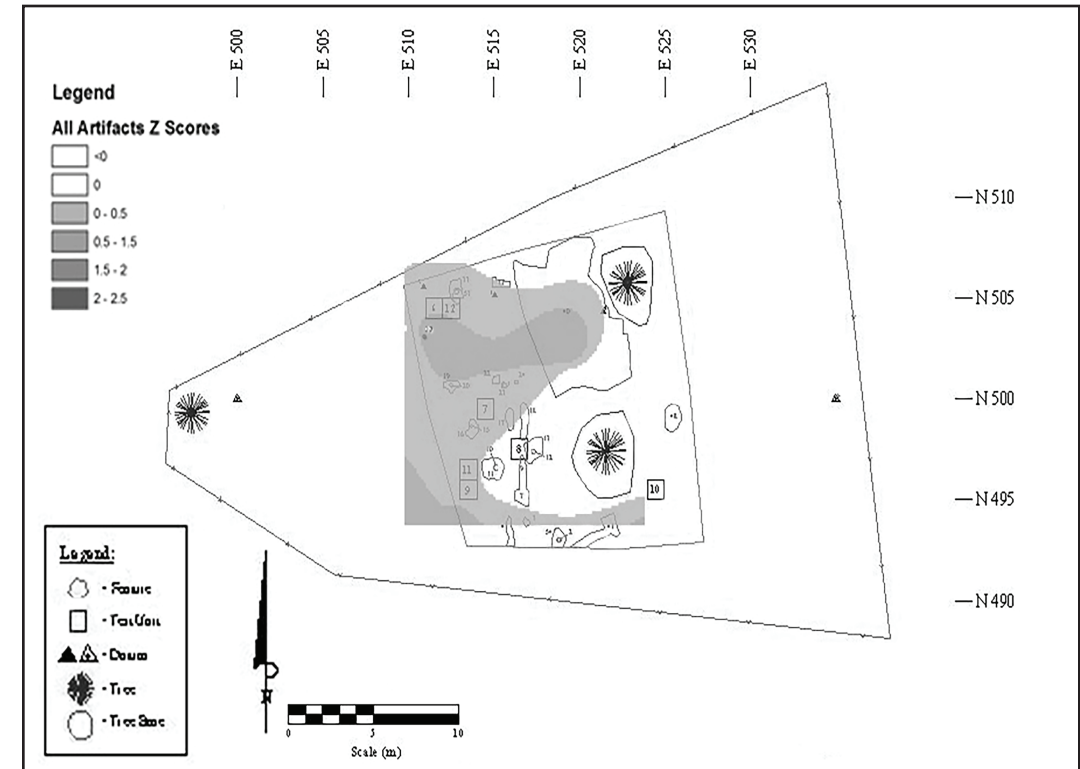


Figure 4. Map showing the plowzone distribution of artifacts at the Snowden Park site. (Figure by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2014.)

small round feature measuring approximately 0.7 ft. (22 cm) in diameter and located approximately 8.9 ft. (2.7 m) northwest of Feature 19, creating a straight line with Features 15 and 19. If these three features are, in fact, part of a longer fence line, then it appears that the southern end of the fence would have either intersected the northern wall of the dwelling approximately 6.6 ft. (2.0 m) away or perhaps turned southwest. The northern extent of the fence line is unknown, since it extends beyond the excavation boundaries. The distribution analysis of artifacts in the plowzone tend to support the idea that the fence extended north and was in existence during the 18th-century occupation of the site due to a peak in artifact density just to the east of the fence and a concentration of phosphorus, representing organic refuse, that appears to represent a separate activity area west of the fence (Wilkins 2014).

Artifact concentrations in the plowzone just to the east of the fence indicate that it may

have served as a boundary for two distinct activity areas within the yard (FIG. 4). However, fully interpreting the activities within these spaces is somewhat difficult, since only a small portion of the area to the west of the fence was not excavated. Nevertheless, the fence and related refuse disposal patterns do indicate some specialized division and use of space at the site, perhaps a more-formal yard space or garden to the west and a work area to the east. Soil chemicals, such as phosphorus, calcium, potassium, and magnesium, also support this division of space since they are all found to the east of the projected fence line (Wilkins 2014) (FIG. 5). As mentioned above, phosphorus is a byproduct of organic matter decaying, while calcium can represent bone or shell, and when combined with potassium and magnesium often suggest ash disposal. At the very least, the soil chemical distributions at the site may suggest a cleaner yard space to the west and a work yard or refuse-disposal area to the east.

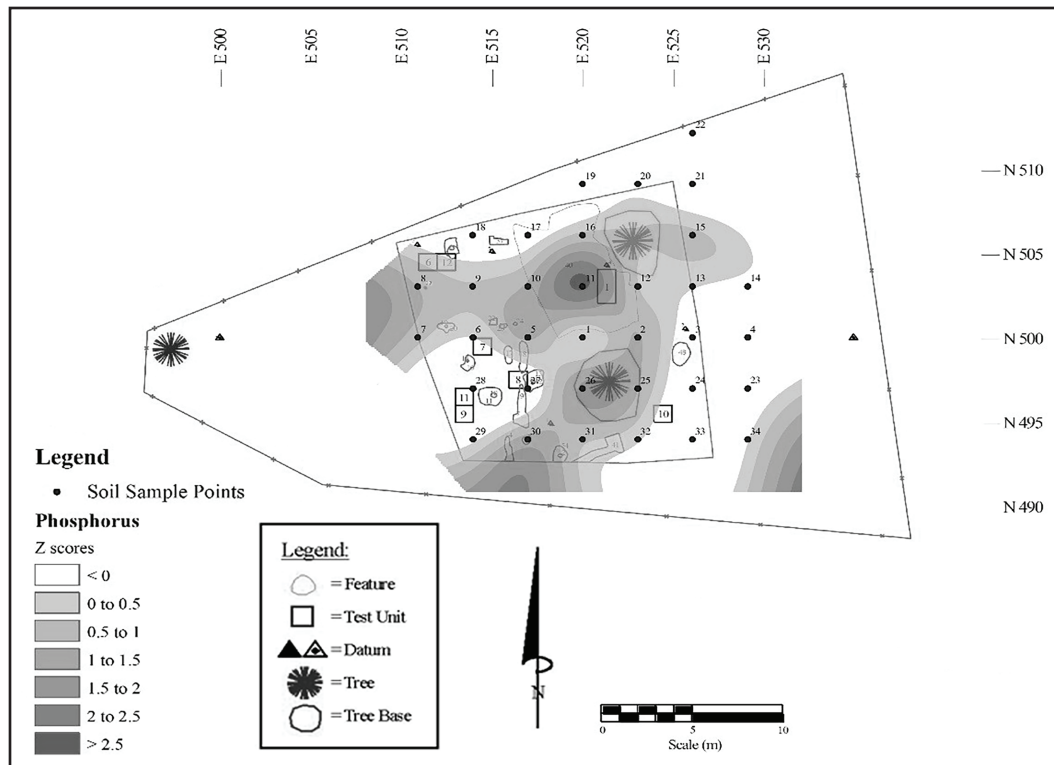


Figure 5. Map showing the plowzone distribution of phosphorus at the Snowden Park site. (Figure by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2014.)

The final major landscape feature uncovered at the Snowden Park site was a large borrow pit north of the dwelling. This feature was originally excavated in order to mine clay for making brick or daub. The presence of a dense deposit of poorly fired brick in the fill of the feature hints at brick production on site. However, brick concentrations in the plowzone were sparse in areas away from the borrow pit, indicating that brick was not a major construction material used for the buildings on site. Brick could have been produced on the site for sale or possibly for use in the construction of William Fitzhugh's Chatham Manor. Fitzhugh, the owner of the Snowden Park site during the 18th century, completed Chatham Manor in 1771, approximately 2 mi. (3.2 km) away across the Rappahannock River. Following the end of the borrow pit's primary use, it eventually became a receptacle for domestic refuse from the dwelling. This use is confirmed by the dense deposit of organic fill with a high concentration of artifacts across the top of the entire feature. This layer

accounted for most of the artifacts recovered from sealed contexts at the site. Artifacts from this uppermost fill layer included domestic debris, such as ceramics, glass, and faunal remains, as well as architectural material consisting primarily of nails and window glass. The TPQ for this stratum is 1795, suggesting that it represents fill related to the abandonment of the site.

In addition to the physical, and more visible, features at the site, refuse middens also acted as an important part of the 18th-century landscape. In general, the analysis of both soil chemical and artifact distributions indicate that most disposal activities occurred in the eastern portion of the site to the northeast and north of the hypothesized dwelling. Increases in artifact and soil chemical concentrations in the plowzone to the west and south of the excavated area suggest the possibility of more buildings or specific activity areas. While the area of the site in which plowzone sampling occurred was relatively small, plowzone distributions of artifacts and soil chemicals were

able to pinpoint specific areas of artifact disposal that appear to be separated by the fence line and buildings. These potentially different activity areas illustrate the specialized uses of space on the site. Based on the admittedly limited data available, these distributions could be interpreted as reflecting ordered space and a complex landscape arrangement, represented by the presence of dirty/utilitarian and clean/formal areas of the yard.

Archaeological analysis and historical research led us to posit a date range of 1761–1795 for the site. The range is bracketed by James Lindsay's projected occupation of the property in 1761 and the sale of interest in the property by Benjamin McCoy's daughter, also named Kezia, in 1795 (TAB. 2). The median of the hypothesized date range is 1778, within three years of the 1781 mean ceramic date calculated for cultural features at the site. Although the site as a whole appears to be associated with both the end of Lindsey's tenure and the McCoy occupation of the property, the buildings encountered during excavation could not have been occupied until the McCoy family arrived on the site, based upon the presence of creamware in the fill of structural postholes. Therefore, most of the material remains recovered from the site represent the McCoy tenancy on the property.

Tenancy in the Chesapeake Region

During the first few decades of English settlement in the Chesapeake region, wealthy planters, in order to increase production on

their lands, sought to establish a system of tenancy similar to that used in the Old World (Walsh 2010: 20). However, the vast quantities of unclaimed land in the Chesapeake served to undermine this aspiration, leading planters to adopt indentured servitude and then slavery as the main form of labor. By the 1640s tenancy had become an intermediate step between servitude and freeholding in the Chesapeake (Walsh 2010: 109). In many cases, indentured servants who had recently completed their terms of service would lease parcels from wealthier planters until they were able to establish their own households on their own property (Walsh 1985: 375). This system served to benefit the landowner, not only through rent payments, but also through the improvement of vacant parcels with buildings, fences, orchards, and cleared fields (Walsh 1985: 375–376).

By the 1680s, large landowners began to shift their leasing strategies from short- to long-term leases (Walsh 1985: 375). These leases were usually valid for three "lives," the lives of the primary renter, his wife, and his child who stood to inherit. This was the case at the Snowden Park site, where the property was leased to Benjamin McCoy, his wife Kezia, and son James. This period of long-term leases was defined by tracts that were often small, less than 200 ac. (80 ha), with high rent, averaging between 650 and 1,200 lb. of tobacco per year (Walsh 1985: 375). These new types of leases had advantages and disadvantages for both the

Table 2. Dating Methods and Results for All Contexts and Cultural Feature Contexts from the Snowden Park Site.

Dating Method	All Contexts	Cultural Features
TPQ	1840	1795
MCD (Adjusted)	1787	1781
Binford	1750	1751
Hanson	1746	1747
Heighton and Deagan	1752	1753
Harrington	1720–1750	1720–1750
Ceramic Intersection	1770–1840	1770–1795
Historical Records Range	1761–1795	1761–1795
Historical Records Mean	1778	1778

tenant and the landlord. For the tenant, the “three-life lease” provided security, the potential for an inheritance to pass on, and the political privileges of free men, despite the smaller parcels and higher rent (Walsh 1985: 376). The landlord benefited by a lower turnover rate and tenants who would invest more in a property in which they had a long-term interest. The major drawback for the landlord was a lack of flexibility, but that was often only an issue for smaller landholders who wanted to farm the parcel at a later date or settle their children on it (Walsh 1985: 376).

By the early 1740s, many of the earliest three-life leases had expired (Walsh 1985: 379). These long-term leases had provided important security and stability for late 17th-century tenants, but when coupled with labor shortages and declining tobacco prices they served to widen the social gap between tenants and their landlords. Multigenerational leases could keep entire families from gaining in social status by making them dependent on their landlords due to high rents and the economic fluctuations related to tobacco prices that defined the late 17th century. These economic and social constraints on tenants were exacerbated by the fact that, starting in the 1680s, the ranks of the elite in the Chesapeake began to solidify with the increase in the numbers of native-born gentry stemming from longer life expectancies and balancing sex ratios, allowing for the establishment of family dynasties (Carr et al. 1991: 151–166).

The end of many of the early three-life leases, coupled with rising land values, led landlords to change their leasing strategies. Around 1750, and increasingly after the Revolution, the length of leases decreased, ranging between 1 and 21 years, and rents began to increase at an accelerated rate (Bliss 1950: 430; Kulikoff 1986:134; Walsh 1985: 387). Shortened leases allowed landlords to be more selective with their tenants, only renewing leases for productive leaseholders who reliably paid rents. At the same time, it served to weaken community bonds of tenants. Many tenants began to move more frequently, making it difficult for them to form strong connections in any one geographic area, as opposed to those whose

leases were for life (Walsh 1985: 384). Additionally, the lack of connection to any one geographic area due to shortened leases helped to reinforce the generally lower investment in housing seen amongst tenants. Rather than improving their dwellings, tenants often invested any surplus capital in consumer goods, livestock, or tools, all portable forms of wealth (Walsh 1985: 381).

The Snowden Park Site in the Context of Tenancy

Based upon the context of tenancy in the late 18th century, the McCoy family appears to have been typical of tenants in some ways and atypical in others. First, the fact that William Fitzhugh granted a three-life lease to Benjamin McCoy as late as 1773 is somewhat unique. The lease of a smaller 20 ac. (8 ha) parcel to McCoy in 1767 may have been a way that Fitzhugh vetted his tenants before conveying a larger parcel and more permanent status. The size of the 1773 leasehold was near the 130 ac. (52.6 ha) average size for a tenancy in the 18th century, as described by Walsh (1985: 379). The dwelling at the site was more than 200 sq. ft. (18.6 m²) larger than the average tenant house in 18th-century Charles County, Maryland, which measured 16 × 20 ft. (4.9 × 6.1 m) (FIG. 3; TAB. 1) (Walsh 1985: 384). Among contemporaneous dwellings for freeholders in Virginia, the dwelling at the Snowden Park site was a little smaller than average, though approximately average size for other tenants and laborers (Hatch et al. 2014: 143). The greater investment in architecture at this site, in the form of a larger-than-average dwelling with an addition, when compared to the larger and, arguably more complete, Maryland tenant sample, may be due to the perceived stability gained by McCoy from a three-life lease. This long-term lease would have helped the McCoy family establish strong community connections in the Fredericksburg area, which would have aided Benjamin McCoy’s business as a saddler and shoemaker. The lease would have assured the family less frequent moves. While the McCoy family moved shortly after Benjamin’s death, indicated by the abandonment of the site, the perceived permanence of their tenure may have influenced their decisions to invest more

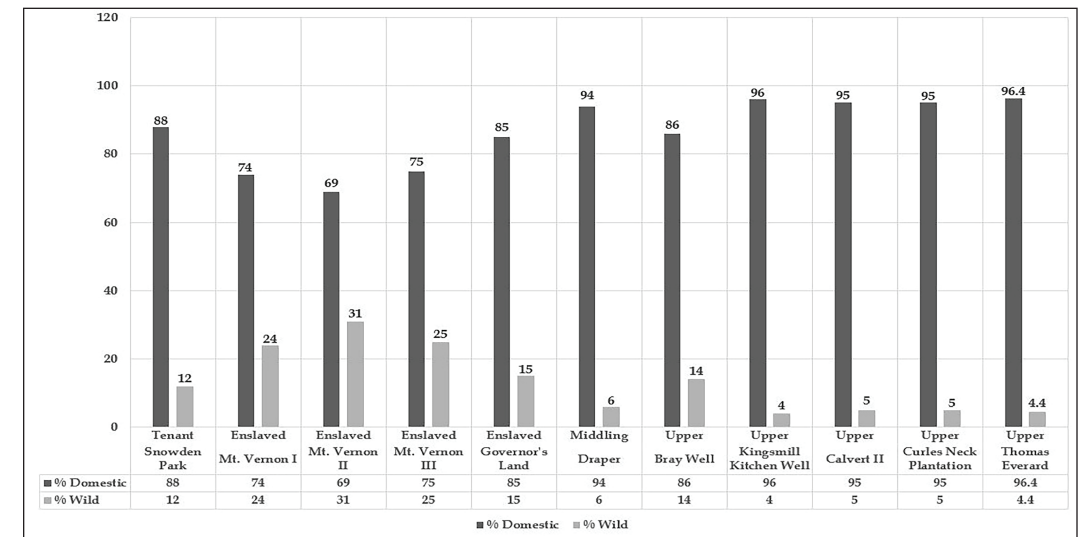


Figure 6. Wild vs. domestic species in faunal assemblages in comparison to the Snowden Park site. (Figure by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2014.)

in the property. The permanence of the McCoy tenure might have also led to a greater investment in bound labor, although the presence of servants on the site is not known from historical or archaeological evidence.

The diet of the McCoy family, as evidenced by the faunal assemblage recovered during the archaeological excavations, indicated some patterns that, at first, seemed unexpected for tenants. Beef, one of the more expensive meats in the 18th century, accounted for more than 72% of the meat diet on the site. This percentage is higher than most contemporary rural sites examined in the Fredericksburg area and elsewhere, and is higher than or comparable to sites occupied by people of higher social status (TAB. 3). Bowen (1996: 112) notes that beef tended to be much more difficult for tenants to acquire in the late 18th century because landowners were using pastureland for their own herds. Clearly, the McCoys did not face this problem.

Economic stress, perhaps as a result of their tenant status, is evident in the McCoy faunal assemblage. Due to the variation in percentages of beef across sites of differing socioeconomic status, Bowen (1996: 110, 112) has suggested that wild game is a somewhat better indicator of socioeconomic status, with wealthy households having less than 9% in their assemblages (FIG. 6). This measure of

status seems to be much more reliable in the case of the Snowden Park site, where the recovered faunal assemblage is 12% wild game. The greater reliance on wild species at the site may be an indicator of economic stress and uncertainty, as has been argued for 17th-century contexts by Henry Miller (1984, 1988).

Ceramics from the Snowden Park site are somewhat ambiguous indicators of tenant status. The 1,181 ceramic sherds recovered from the site represent no fewer than 68 vessels (TAB. 4). Ceramics made up 23% of the entire assemblage recovered during the final archaeological excavations from the site. The percentage of ceramics recovered indicates a clear investment in portable consumer goods, as Walsh (1985: 381) predicted for tenant sites. This investment in ceramics does not appear to be far beyond the normal range for other sites in the Fredericksburg region as a whole (Barile et al. 2008). In addition to everyday wares, the McCoys were purchasing specialized forms, such as punchbowls and teacups. The ceramic assemblage also showed significant proportions of plates. All of these vessel forms indicate the participation in fashionable dining practices associated with the consumer revolution and concepts of individuality that began to permeate all levels of society in the mid-18th century (Breen 2013; Carson 1994; J. Deetz 1977; Martin 2008; Pogue 2001; Yentsch 1994).

Table 3. A sample of 18th-century faunal assemblages.

Site	Date	Socioeconomic Status	Percentage of Beef	Percentage of Pork	Percentage of Wild Meat	Citation
Snowden Park Site	1761–1795	Tenant	72%	15%	12%	
Governor's Land	1740–1790	Tenant	72%	9%	15%	Bowen 1996: 110
The Maurice Clark Site (44ST0174)	ca. 1700–1727	Poor Planter	47%	32%	20%	Hatch 2012b
The Washington House (44ST0174)	1740–1771	Middling Planter	41%	29%	25%	Hatch 2014
Ferry Farm (44VB0138)	ca. 1730–1800	Middling Planter	63%	24%	2%	Walsh et al. 1997: 244
The Boothe Site (44IW0111)	1759–1792	Middling Planter	71%	22%	<1%	Walsh et al. 1997: 247
Curles Neck (44HE0388)	ca. 1750–1790	Wealthy Planter	71%	19%	4%	Walsh et al. 1997: 241
Kingsmill (44JC0037)	1744–1781	Wealthy Planter	65%	19%	8%	Walsh et al. 1997: 243
The Washington Slave Quarter (44ST0174)	1760–1771	Enslaved African	32%	45%	15%	Hatch 2014

Table 4. Specific vessel form counts from the Snowden Park site.

Vessel Form	Count
Bowl	2
Bowl/Porringer	2
Bowl/Punch Bowl	2
Bowl/Saucer	3
Bowl?	5
Hollow	7
Mug/Tankard	5
Mug/Tankard?	1
Mug?	2
Pan	9
Plate	11
Plate/Saucer	3
Porringer	1
Porringer/Bowl	1
Pot	1
Pot/Jug	4
Punch Bowl	2
Saucer?	3
Tea Bowl	1
Tea Bowl?	2
Tea Pot	1

Nineteen historical ware types were represented in the collection obtained during the excavations at the Snowden Park site. Wares include, but are not limited to: Astbury, Whieldon, American stoneware, Nottingham stoneware, Westerwald stoneware, white salt-glazed stoneware, whiteware, Buckley, manganese mottled, redware, Staffordshire slipware, English brown stoneware, tin glazed, pearlware, and creamware. Food and beverage serving and consumption vessels were the most common functional types in the assemblage (53 vessels, or 78%) followed by preparation and storage vessels (15 vessels, or 22%). The ratio of flat wares to hollow wares is 1:3 (25% vs. 75%). By specific function, the most common identifiable vessels were bowls and

plates, followed by pans and mugs/tankards. There were 14 plates or likely plates, consisting primarily of creamware ($n=7$) and white salt-glazed stoneware ($n=3$). Only one of the creamware plates had molded feather-edged decoration, while all three white salt-glazed stoneware plates had molded rims with either the dot, diaper, and basket pattern or the barley pattern. Tea-related vessels numbered 13 and included Chinese porcelain, creamware, and pearlware tea bowls, a pearlware teapot, and saucers. Additionally, there were two tin-glazed punchbowls, two Staffordshire slipware porringers, and eight mugs/tankards. Wares with decorative surface treatments, specifically hand painting and transfer printing, tended to be tea-related vessels, while vessels for food consumption tended to be plain.

Despite the evidence of fashionable dining practices in the McCoy household, the ceramic assemblage did show some evidence of economic stress when viewed through the lens of tenancy. Specifically, the decorated wares recovered from the site appear to be mismatched, indicating that the McCoyes were probably not able to purchase large matched sets of ceramics, but cobbled together pieces over time (FIG. 7). For instance, of the 75 decorated pearlware fragments, 11 different styles are represented. Motifs present were rendered in various styles of hand painting, transfer printing, and edged decoration.

In addition to mismatched sets, the inhabitants of the McCoy site mended some of their broken vessels (FIG. 8 and 9). A small punch-bowl recovered from the site was mended using iron rivets. The location of the repair, near the rim, suggests that the bowl could have functioned in some capacity after the repair. The Chinoiserie motif on the vessel is upside down when the punch bowl sits with the mouth up, as it typically would if being used. The orientation of the decoration indicates that it likely served primarily as a display item, suggesting the occupants of the site were well aware of, and participated in, contemporary practices for the display of social status. However, they apparently lacked the capital to buy a new vessel when theirs broke and/or placed a high value on that specific punch bowl for sentimental or display reasons, choosing instead to repair it. Items that held a

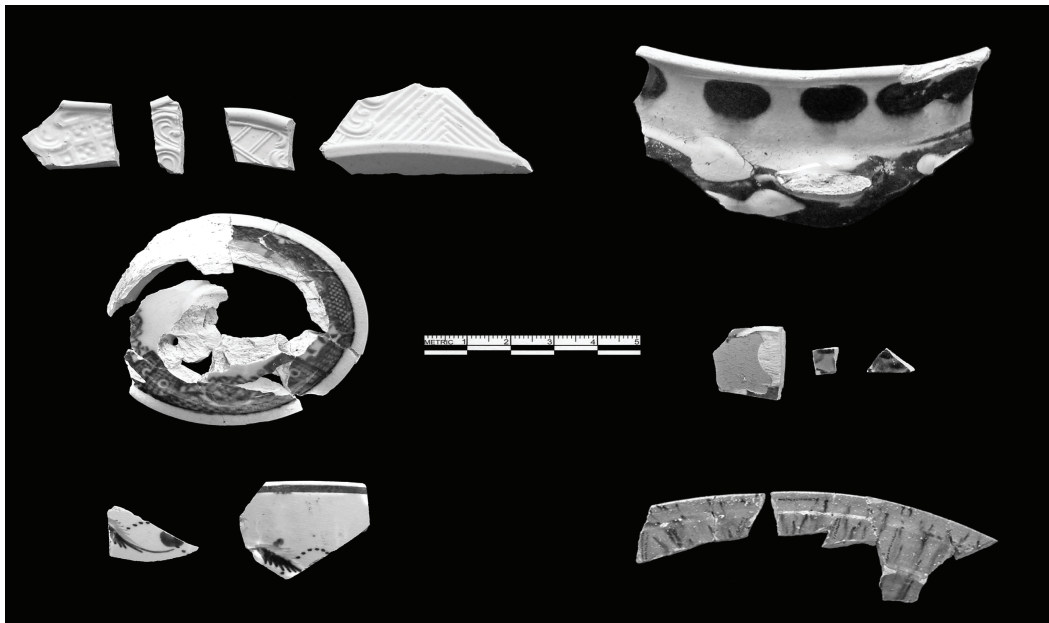


Figure 7. A sample of the ceramics recovered from the Snowden Park site, showing variation in ware types. From top left, clockwise: a white, slip-dipped stoneware cup; dipped creamware; a hand-painted pearlware cup; a Staffordshire slip-decorated mug; a white salt-glazed stoneware plate; and a manganese mottled plate. (Photo by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2014.)



Figure 8. Fragments of the hand-decorated tin-glazed vessels. Top and bottom left represent fragments from mended punchbowl. Bottom right punchbowl fragments illustrate blue and purple motif of second punchbowl from the site. (Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2014.)

sentimental value were often repaired and thus kept in the family. Research conducted by Mara Kaktins and Melanie Marquis found evidence of glue residue on several ceramics associated with Mary Washington, George Washington's mother (Kaktins and Marquis 2012, Kaktins et al. this issue). One of the objects Mary Washington had mended was a creamware punchbowl enameled with a floral motif. Kaktins and Marquis (2012) hypothesize that the mend would not have allowed the vessel to hold liquid and, thus, not function in its original capacity. As such, it is likely that, after mending, the punchbowl was used as a showpiece rather than as a utilitarian vessel. This action suggests that the piece was of sentimental value or was primarily for display, as Mary made the conscious choice to keep it, knowing it would not function as intended.

At the Snowden Park site, artifacts and patterns of consumption specifically indicative of tenancy are few and far between. Overall, the site appears fairly typical for a late 18th-century farmstead in terms of the size of the dwelling, diet, and access to consumer goods. Had this site been excavated in the absence of records indicating whether the occupants owned the land, it could have just as easily been interpreted as the home of a middling freeholder. Based upon historical research on tenancy and the impermanence of tenants in the 18th century, these sites might be expected to show evidence of far smaller than average dwellings, a less developed landscape in terms of specialized work areas, fences, and buildings, less investment in material goods, lower quality goods, and a generally poorer diet with high proportions of wild game (Bliss 1950; Walsh 1985, 1997). The archaeological remains from the Snowden Park site do not show evidence of extravagant wealth, nor do they point to poverty. The McCoy family lived comfortably, keeping up with contemporary fashions, but doing so in a thrifty manner, as evidenced by the slightly higher than average pro-

portions of wild game and the mended punchbowl used for display. In many ways they were typical of small farmers in late 18th-century Virginia, adapting their economic and agricultural strategies to fit their situation.

Were the McCoy's typical tenants? According to Walsh's (1988) research, it appears that they were not. First, the length of their lease was exceedingly long for the period, reminiscent of practices that were in use nearly a century earlier. Their house was also larger than expected and included an addition, showing some measure of investment in architecture, not common among tenants during the late 18th century. Their diet was rich in beef, an expensive meat during the time, and they were dining in the latest fashion, consuming food from individual vessels. Perhaps the favorable lease terms enjoyed by the McCoy family allowed them to invest more heavily in architecture, food, and consumer goods than other tenants on short-term leases. The three-life lease of the McCoy family would have certainly made it possible for them to put down roots in Fredericksburg. This stability would have fostered strong community connections, as the uncertainty of their tenure on the property would have been mitigated. The connections would not only have benefited Benjamin's business as a leather worker, but also helped to expand local and transatlantic trading connections, increasing access to consumer goods.

Aspects of the archaeological assemblage, when viewed in relation to the tenant status of the occupants, do help to provide insight into

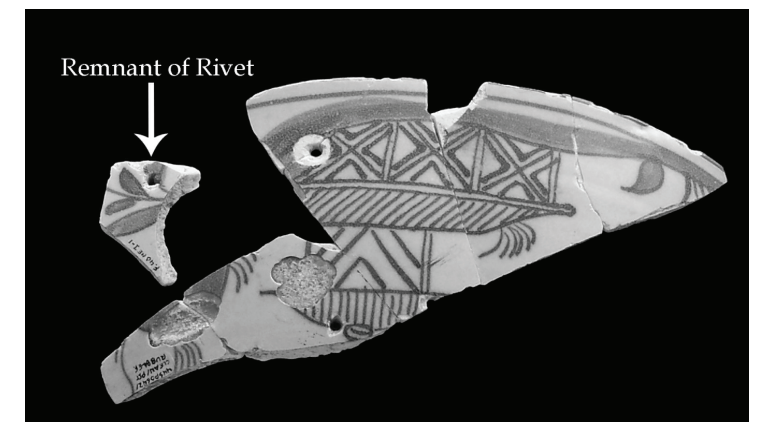


Figure 9. Detail showing evidence of the mending of the small punchbowl from the Snowden Park site. (Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, 2014.)

the lives of McCoy family members that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. The lack of repaired postholes associated with the dwelling over the course of its three decades of occupation may indicate a lack of capital, rather than impermanency due to tenant status. Home-repair work, even in the 18th century, would have required specialized skills, tools, and labor to which an average person may not have had access. The economic stress of tenancy also appears to be evident in the higher-than-average reliance on wild game as well as a lack of matching ceramic sets. Finally, the repair of a fashionable punchbowl by the family illustrates that, while they understood the latest trends in consumption, they were unable or unwilling to make expensive and non-essential purchases. Rather than buying a new punchbowl when theirs broke, as a wealthier planter might have done, they chose to repair the bowl and continue using it, perhaps hiding the repaired portion from view when displayed on a shelf.

Finally, we come to the question of whether tenancy can be “seen” in the archaeological record. The short answer, based upon the examination of the Snowden Park site, is no. There do not appear to be any specific artifacts or patterns that indicate that the McCoy's were tenants. Indeed, the assemblage from the site appears relatively typical for a middling planter, whether freeholder or tenant. It should be noted that the McCoy's were not typical tenants, particularly in terms of the length of their lease. Nevertheless, what is seen archaeologically is likely more indicative of their economic status than their landowning status, as is common for most assemblages, underscoring the importance of historical research in the archaeological process. The tenant status of the McCoy's, known only from the historical record, allows for more nuanced interpretations of the material culture on the site, hinting at the motivations of, and constraints on, the individuals living there. Clearly, more data on tenant sites need to be collected, but this cursory examination has revealed that tenancy, for people in the Chesapeake, was not a narrowly defined economic status. Tenants ran the gamut from very wealthy to extremely poor. As historical archaeologists, we are in a unique position to highlight the diversity of this group

of people and challenge historical interpretations of the material lives of tenants in the region, shedding new light on this understudied yet significant proportion of the Chesapeake population.

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