

# HUDSON'S SQUARE—A PLACE THROUGH TIME

## ARCHEOLOGICAL DATA RECOVERY ON

### BLOCK 2 OF INDEPENDENCE MALL

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Note by R. Boyer:

I helped reconstruct/re-assemble some pottery shards with some other members of the Transferware Collectors Club on Dec 7, 2009. The first piece I got to work on and put together was a Richard Jordan waste bowl (inventory item 1473)! The shards are from the site of the new Independence Visitor Center in Phila, in the area of 6<sup>th</sup> & Market Streets, which was once William Hudson's farm. The farm was sold into building lots in the mid 1700's and occupied by a mix of wealthy, middle class, and lower class households. By the 1830's the houses gradually morphed into commercial space (stores and small manufactories) because the area was becoming part of the central business district. A fire destroyed the block in 1856 and the area gradually deteriorated into a slum. In the 1960's the slum was razed without excavation and turned into a park intended to be a gateway to Independence Hall. The park was a cold, lifeless place inconsistent with the colonial theme. In the late 1990's early 2000's the site was extensively excavated prior to the Independence Visitor Center being built. The complete report summarizes the excavations; following are excerpts from the report.

#### **Emlen family growing up in the 1830's p 53-54**

“There were elegant dinners in the upstairs dining room (the shop and manufactory were downstairs), served on the best china—blue-printed dishes with castles on them (Figure 27). The grown-ups ate all sorts of queer things: quail and pheasant and rabbit. Ann preferred their everyday meals—chicken was good, and meat pie was alright. She even preferred the dishes they were eaten on. It didn't matter if she dropped an everyday plate since there were piles just like it in the pantry—white with blue around the edges—and serving dishes in every shape and size. (Figure 28). It seemed funny that dishes could be so important, that one set of visitors—her mother's friends, for instance—were served tea in the fancy cups with gold rims while the family drank from the ones with pictures of dogs on them (Figure 28). It all seemed perfect until the scarlet fever came. William, the oldest and only living son in the family, was 16 when they made the move to Market Street, and within 10 years he was married and a partner in the business. William and his wife, Anna Maria, had two little girls, Mary Denckla, born in 1833, and Anna Louisa, born two years later. Ann loved her nieces, who were not so much younger than she, and they played for hours together, pretending to bake cakes for their dolls and setting the table in the nursery with the miniature tea things that were their prized possessions (Figure 29). She threw the tea sets into the trash when the little girls died of scarlet fever in 1839, one on one day and the other on the next. It was too sad to want to play ever again. She even would have thrown her doll away if Ann Eliza had not stopped her.

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Just as indigenous foods seem to have continued to be important in Philadelphia well into the nineteenth century, indigenous ceramics continued to be part of the Philadelphia style, at least in

the kitchen. In the dining room, however, middle-class (and certainly elite) Philadelphians were as fashion conscious as anyone else.

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### **P 73-77 References**

De Silver

1830 *DeSilver's Philadelphia Directory and Stranger's Guide*.

1833 *DeSilver's Philadelphia Directory and Stranger's Guide*.

1835 *DeSilver's Philadelphia Directory and Stranger's Guide*.

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1918 *Market Street, Philadelphia: The Most Historic Highway in America, Its Merchants, and Its Story*. Joseph Jackson, Philadelphia.

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1991 Sacred Dinners and Secular Teas: Constructing Domesticity in Mid-Nineteenth-Century New York. In "Gender in Historical Archaeology," edited by Donna Seifert. *Historical Archaeology*, 25(4):69-89.

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**Ceramic assemblage –(i.e. drawing conclusions about the pottery shards found) p 108-109** (Note: it appears that most of the pieces were produced before 1830, so I could draw a conclusion that the items in the privies were replaced by newer pieces produced after 1830, which presumably would not have been disposed of unless individual pieces were broken – rwb)

Sets were identified based on a minimum of three matching vessels or three different vessel forms of the same ware with identical decoration.

For analysis, the ceramic assemblage was broken down into the following functional groupings: teaware, tableware, beverage consumption, kitchen, and hygiene. Teawares include vessels associated with the drinking of tea as well as other hot beverages, namely coffee and chocolate. In some cases it was possible to distinguish which beverage was being consumed by vessel form. Tablewares consist primarily of flatware vessel forms used in serving and eating food in the formal setting of a parlor or dining room. Hollowwares associated with dining were placed in a separate group for beverage consumption. This group included vessels used to prepare, serve, and consume non-tea/coffee/chocolate beverages. Kitchen vessels reflect food preparation and storage, cooking, and eating activities generally restricted to the informal setting of the kitchen work area. The fifth group, hygiene, comprises ceramic vessels associated with personal health and hygiene. All other ceramic vessels, such as those related to household furnishing, gardening,

and miniatures (toys), are discussed in the small-finds section.

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#### **P 114**

With the exception of the rococo patterns, these table services were discarded while still popular, though as mentioned above, they showed evidence of heavy use before being relegated to the trash heap. Nearly half of the vessels were over 50 percent complete with the most common table forms represented, suggesting that whole sets were thrown out. Possible explanations for this behavior include when someone moves and disposes of old, out-of-style objects, when too many pieces of a set are worn and incomplete from breakage, or from illness. It should be noted that there was a cholera epidemic in Philadelphia in 1825, which may have inspired the discarding of large quantities of household goods.

The tableware vessels that did not belong to sets were generally compatible and may have been purchased to replace broken pieces. Exceptions were three very fine overglaze-decorated porcelain plates (V. 690-692) dating from 1750-1800, which may have been curated pieces.

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#### **P124 why privies contain so much pottery and glass shards**

In light of the rich archeological deposits found in privy features, it is surprising to find that trash was collected in Philadelphia as early as 1767. However, the collection of trash probably refers to kitchen waste. Removal of such material was no doubt in response to the epidemics that swept through the city during this period. If this was the case, why then was so much trash, predominantly ceramic and glass, thrown down privies? Cosan's explanation is that it was bulky and nonbiodegradable, readily available, and probably free (in Liggett 1981:271). The widespread occurrence of these deposits indicates it was "common knowledge" of the day that recycled dishes and bottles at the bottom of privies actually enhanced the functioning of the privies, and that it must have been an accepted practice as well as convenient and easy. Joan Geismar's study of waste-disposal practices in nineteenth-century New York indicates that by the middle of the century (1860) ordinances were in place in that city that directed privies be cleaned prior to filling them and prohibited using them for the disposal of "vegetable substances" or garbage (Geismar 1993:65). The dense layer of ceramics and glass in AS II was mixed with kitchen garbage, probably in violation of Philadelphia's ordinance.

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#### **P127-140 types of ceramics discarded by the Everly family who lived in house 1822-1856**

The ceramics associated with these affluent early residents of 225 High Street (AS I and II) indicate that the ritual of tea drinking was a significant part of their lives. Prior to 1800 tea generally followed dinner, but after that it became more fashionable to take tea in the afternoon (Godden 1995:175). It may be that the only creamware tea set (#1) was used with the creamware table settings to serve tea following dinner in the homes of the Anthonys, Kunkles, or Dr. Wistar. The bulk of the tablewares discarded in AS II were edge decorated and probably represent everyday settings. Shell-edged wares, originally marketed for upper-middle-class families, were the least expensive English earthenware with color decoration available between 1780 and 1860 (Hunter and Miller 1994:432-443). Mrs. Parkes, in her book entitled *Domestic Duties; or Instructions to Young Married Ladies*, published in 1828, stated that a proper household should have a dinner service of china for company, one for ordinary use, and a third for the kitchen (Busch 1983:69). The green- and blue-shell-edged tablewares found in AS II were undoubtedly the dishes the Henrys and Helmuths used for "ordinary use" because once used they were not considered good enough to take with them. To these merchant families ceramics were cheap and easily replaced. New sets would have been easy to acquire, especially since both Henry and Helmuth were import/export merchants and may well have dealt in ceramics as well as other things. For formal dining, they used porcelain, blue Canton (Set #13) or overglaze polychrome porcelain exported from China.

Toiletry articles—a soap box and a toothbrush holder—decorated in transfer-printed scenes, along with a matching ewer and wash basin found in AS V, reflect the mid-century concern with hygiene. Undecorated plain chamber pots and ointment pots, in creamware and tin-glazed earthenware, made up the rest of the Everlys' hygienic wares. Many of the chamber pots had a predictable pattern of breakage, a hole in the base, no doubt made while tapping the upturned pot on the bottom to empty its contents (Figure A-73). This pattern was observed in the creamware chamber pots only, the creamware vessels being thinner walled than the redware chamber pots.

The ceramic assemblage associated with the Everly family reflects an upwardly mobile, middleclass urban family. Their tea and table services reflected the latest fashions of the day as dictated by the English ceramic market. Their several sets of dishes suggest that they followed the dictum of the day, which called for “one for company, one for ordinary use, and one for the kitchen” (Busch 1983:69). Even children had imported English teawares for their play. The Everlys did not rely exclusively on the utilitarian wares made locally in Philadelphia, but purchased imports as well, probably because they were nearly as cheap, but also because they may have been considered of a superior quality.

Later nineteenth-century residents at 225 High Street, e.g., two generations of the Everly family, were also relatively well-to-do and probably counted as members of Philadelphia's upper middle class.

A tangible difference between the earliest deposit (AS II) in Feature B and the deposits relating to the Everly family (AS III and V) was the presence of discarded sets, both for tableware and teaware. The presence of matched sets in the homes of the tenants and later owners at 225 High Street and the owners associated with Feature G reflects their high status. The presence of sets is a sign of more formal dining rather than the one dish meal of the eighteenth century, consumed in individual bowls or plates taken from a communal pot (Wall 1994:262). Eighteenth-century vessel forms such as porringers and trenchers were found in Features B and G, and porringers were found in Feature E although trenchers were absent. The increase in trenchers thrown out by the William Everlys is probably due to the fact that this vessel form was replaced by platters. Porringers were replaced by small bowls and soup plates. A range of flatware vessel forms in various sizes—muffins, twifflers (desert plates), supper plates, and dinner plates—reflect increasingly elaborate dining practices. This shift in focus to the presentation of food emphasized the social aspect of meal consumption, and the move from one-dish dining to dining in several courses created a corresponding set of behaviors and expectations by people who could afford this luxury.

The ceramics in Features B and G reflect occupants who were avid consumers of all things English and Chinese. They used local wares in the kitchen, but their tables were set with English plates, and tea was served in even more expensive tea sets, preferably painted Chinese Export porcelain and later, transfer-printed English porcelain. They could and did afford two or three different table settings, plain or molded creamware for everyday use, and porcelain for entertaining. Later in time, the undecorated creamware settings were replaced by edge-decorated wares in green or blue for everyday use and blue-transfer-printed table sets for entertaining.

As city dwellers, they strove to have all the refinements of life that money could buy. Dishes, apart from being tools used to consume food, became symbols of newfound wealth and status, disposable property subject to the whims of fashion.

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