ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT THE BLOSSOM POINT FARMHOUSE (18CH216), CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND

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Abstract

Archeological excavations at the Blossom Point Farmhouse focused on sub-floor deposits in the three main rooms of the house, which was built during the first half of the 19th century. Diagnostic artifacts indicate that the archeological deposits date to the middle to late 19th century with a mix of 20th century artifacts added later. During this time period, the house was occupied by the overseers of the Blossom Point Farm whose socioeconomic status was not all that high. Food remains from the Blossom Point farmhouse reveal a diet that included the use of both wild game and domesticated animals. Home butchering of domesticated animals, including pigs, chickens, and turkeys, for immediate consumption took place. Inexpensive meat cuts of beef were purchased. Wild animals, fish, and shellfish of the Potomac estuary were also part of the diets of the site's inhabitants. The picture of rural life in the 19th century at Blossom Point Farm that emerges from the archeological data is consistent with the archival data. The inhabitants of the farm were not of the lowest socioeconomic status, but they certainly were not part of higher status groups either.

Introduction

This article describes archeological excavations undertaken at the Blossom Point Farmhouse, which is located at the end of Cedar Point Neck in Charles County, Maryland, at the confluence of Nanjemoy Creek and the Potomac River. The site is currently owned by the United States Government for use as a testing facility under control of the Army Materiel Command. The entire Blossom Point property is a subinstallation of the Adelphi Laboratory Center and originally was leased from the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) from 1942 to 1980. In 1980, the property was purchased from the Society of Jesus and at that time the brick farmhouse was the only surviving structure of the original farm operation which had included a number of barns and outbuildings.

Prior archeological and architectural investigations at the site (Kise, Franks, and Straw 1990) revealed that the house itself was built ca. 1805 and that the only intact archeological remains associated with it were a series of refuse deposits located beneath the floorboards of the house itself. All of the surrounding yard areas had been extensively disturbed. The archeological investigations described in this article sought to recover archeological data relevant to the lifeways and diets of the site's historic inhabitants. After the completion of the excavations, the house was demolished due to structural instabilities caused by natural erosion of the nearby shoreline of Nanjemoy Creek.

Historical Background

The following historical background of the Blossom Point Farmhouse is based on earlier archival research provided by Kise, Franks, and Straw (1990) and Wilke et al. (1980).

The historic occupation of Cedar Point Neck began with the arrival of members of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) in Maryland during the middle of the 17th century. Although religious societies were not allowed to own property in Maryland until 1792, when the Maryland legislature chartered the Corporation of Roman Catholic Clergymen, the Jesuits were granted large tracts of land by the proprietors of the Maryland colony to hold in trust. Usually, Catholic laymen were granted patents to the land on behalf of the Jesuits and in 1649 such a patent was granted to Thomas Matthews by Father Copley of the Society of Jesus. This land patent included 4000 acres, 3500 of which were located on Cedar Point Neck and encompassed the Blossom Point Farm. The entire estate was known as St. Thomas Manor.

In 1684, Richard Boughton, onetime Secretary of the Colony of Maryland, obtained a long-term lease for a 400-acre tract of land that included Blossom Point Farm. The terms of the lease required Boughton to "uphold, repair, sustain, maintain and amend the said two tenements with their appurtenances and all new buildings whatsoever upon the premises to be built during the said term and all fences and enclosures and so on" (Zwinge 1910, Vol. 42:1-4) and to pay a yearly rent of 1000 pounds of tobacco.

It is difficult to reconstruct much of the 18th and 19th century history of Blossom Point because many of the Jesuit records were destroyed by a fire in 1866; however, some facts can be noted. Prior to the American Revolution, the Jesuits leased farms for long-term periods of up to 21 years. The rent system was

usually based on crop shares of up to one-third of the corn, wheat, and tobacco raised on the farms. Tobacco from the yearly rents yielded between 10,000 and 28,000 pounds of tobacco from St. Thomas Manor alone, and the Jesuits used these crops to support a lucrative trade with London and Scottish tobacco merchants. During this time period, Blossom Point was one of the most prosperous of the farms. However, this trade and prosperity were ended by the American Revolution and the farms of St. Thomas Manor, particularly those of Blossom Point, went into a decline that extended into the 19th century.

As revenues from the farms declined and the market for tobacco evaporated, the Jesuits shifted to a cash rent system and a series of short-term leases. Most of the lease terms specified a 4 or 5 field crop rotation system and use of appropriate fertilizer, prohibited cutting of timber, and forbade sub-tenants (Zwinge 1910, Vol. 41:196-197). However, the absence of long-term leases led to a high turnover rate for tenants and many of these tenants did not contribute to the maintenance of the properties. Furthermore, St. Thomas Manor operated at a deficit of up to $1400 per year between 1780 and 1820 and funds were not available to improve the Blossom Point Farm properties. In 1824, Blossom Point Farm was described as being in "wretched" condition (Hughes 1907:362). The deterioration of the farm's condition is manifest in the fact that the actual number of tenant farms on Blossom Point declined from 20 in 1755 to 9 in 1857 (Zwinge 1910, Vol. 42:10).

There are some indications of improvements in farm conditions at Blossom Point during the first half of the 19th century (Kise, Franks, and Straw 1990:18-19). These improvements may have been due to income from the sale of slaves which occurred throughout the first quarter of the 19th century. By 1838 all of the slaves belonging to St. Thomas Manor had been sold. Some of these funds may have been used to build the current Blossom Point Farmhouse which was the focus of the archeological investigations reported here.

Between 1788 and 1832 the tenant of Blossom Point Farm was Bennett Semmes, who acted as overseer and agent (collector of rents) for all of the Jesuit farms on Cedar Point. In 1805 the Jesuits built a house for Semmes and the architectural investigations of the remaining extant house (Kise, Franks, and Straw 1990:43-61) indicate that the "new" house referred to in the archival records was the extant brick house on Blossom Point. Semmes's residence began a tradition of this house being the home of the Blossom Point overseer and this tradition lasted until well into the 20th century.

Semmes is the only overseer for whom there are any real historic records in the Jesuit archives and even these are quite vague and do not provide any good indications of his socioeconomic status. Although he was an overseer and did collect a fee for his services, Semmes experienced difficulties in paying his own rents in 1825 and 1826. However, he was in fully paid standing by the time of his death in 1832. Semmes's will is also quite vague and is not a good indicator of his socioeconomic status. However, the vague nature of the will is itself a sign that he did not have significant amounts of goods to distribute. Although the records are not always clear, it does seem safe to say that Semmes was not a rich man.

The 1860 Agricultural Census shows that Blossom Point was the most valuable of the Jesuit farms in St. Thomas Manor (Table 1). This census shows that tobacco was the major cash crop grown, along with corn and wheat. Other products from the farm included oats, wool, peas, beans, potatoes, orchard crops, butter, beeswax, and honey. A detailed analysis of the agricultural census data (Custer 1993:48-50) shows that although the Blossom Point Farm was one of the most valuable of the Jesuit farms, it was not one of the most efficient. Most of its value came from its relatively highly valued improvements and its large amounts of livestock.

During the 1860s, commercial fisherman constructed a wharf for shad fishing at Blossom Point and this activity contributed to the farm's income. However, the growing prosperity of the farm was cut short by the Civil War. Blossom Point was used as a Federal Army Camp during the war, and the resources and property of the farm were badly depleted. The Jesuits claimed $31,000 in damages from the Federal government after the Civil War, but only received $4,000.

After the Civil War the Jesuits tried to sell the Blossom Point Farm on several occasions, but there were no buyers. Real estate agents noted the poor condition of the farm as a detriment to its sale. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries a series of short-term tenants grew tobacco on the farm. However, crops were often insufficient to allow payment of rents. By the 1920s the last tenants left the farm and were not replaced. Most of the farm then lay fallow until it was leased to the United States Army as a test facility in 1942.

The general picture of the Blossom Point Farm that emerges from the historic background data is one of general deterioration from the American Revolution onward to the mid-20th century. The system of short-term leases greatly contributed to deterioration of the

	Improved acres	Unimproved acres	Cash value of farm	Value of farming improve. & mach.	horses	asses & mules	milch cows	working oxen	other cattle	sheep	swine	value livestock	wheat (bushels)	indian corn (bu.)	oats (bu.)	tobacco (lbs.)	wool (lbs.)	peas & beans (bu.)	Irish potatoes (bu.)	sweet potatoes (bu.)	value of orchard products	butter (lbs.)	hay (tons)	beeswax (lbs.)	honey (lbs.)	value of homemade manufactures	value of animals slaughtered
16. C.T. Bateman	125	25	5,000	25	4	-	3	2	-	-	9	300	-	375	30	3,500	-	-	20	-	-	100	-	-	-	-	100
17. C. Long	150	25	5,500	75	6	4	6	2	10	15	25	1,000	200	500	110	2,000	25	-	10	-	-	150	-	5	25	10	100
18. E. Stonestreet	400	50	10,000	150	9	2	6	8	6	34	80	1,000	580	1,500	250	5,000	75	-	100	-	-	200	-	-	-	25	500
19. James Howard	300	100	2,000	50	-	-	1	2	14	-	16	100	60	150	15	3,000	-	2	5	-	10	-	-	-	-	15	70
20. A.L. Welsh	250	50	3,000	30	4	-	2	6	12	14	35	300	100	400	80	3,000	42	2	-	-	10	75	-	-	-	10	100
21. J.O. Oliver	200	-	3,500	150	6	-	5	4	6	-	15	500	230	275	-	2,000	-	1	-	3	-	50	-	-	-	-	100
22. James Higdon	200	200	10,000	200	2	2	4	4	9	16	20	720	500	350	15	-	40	-	2	-	-	25	-	-	-	-	100
23. J.C. St.Clair	160	70	6,000	100	7	2	3	4	15	16	14	1,000	400	500	70	5,000	30	-	3	-	-	50	-	-	-	-	150
24. C.A. Pye (Blossom Pt.Farm)	160	165	10,000	200	4	5	7	6	15	20	20	600	400	750	200	10,000	60	-	50	-	-	100	-	-	-	-	250

TABLE 1. 1860 Agricultural Census.

farm as did an absence of capital to improve its condition. Blossom Point was in some ways caught in a vicious circle. The more that the farm deteriorated, the less money was available for improvement of the farm's condition, allowing for continued deterioration. Clearly, the farm did not produce large profits for the Jesuits and the management provided by the farm's overseers did not do much to enhance its profitability. Difficulties in attracting tenants also reveals much about the problems faced by the managers of Blossom Point Farm. In sum, life on Blossom Point Farm seems to be one of rural poverty for much of its history, and this rural poverty seems to have characterized both tenants and managers to some degree.

Previous Research

During earlier test excavations at the site (Kise, Franks, and Straw 1990), two test units were excavated within the house (Figure 1). Unit D was excavated in the main brick section of the house and a loose silty refuse fill deposit was encountered immediately beneath the floorboards. This deposit was approximately 0.5' thick and included a few artifacts, primarily nails, oyster shells, and bone remains (Kise, Franks, and Straw 1990:Appendix A). The earliest historic artifacts from these soils were cut nails with a latest date of use in the late-nineteenth century. Faunal remains included cow, pig, sheep, muskrat, cat, rat, opossum, duck, unidentified species of bird, crab, catfish, and other identified fish. The cat, rat, and opossum are all probably natural inhabitants of the area beneath the floorboards; however, the other animal species represent food remains. The presence of potential animal habitation of the area beneath the floorboards and the thin nature of the silty refuse deposits precluded the identification of any stratification of these deposits.

Test Unit E was excavated within the frame section of the house and recovered materials similar to those encountered in Unit D (Kise, Franks, and Straw 1990:Appendix A). Bottle glass indicative of the late 19th century and ceramics dating to the mid-19th to early 20th century were present in a silty deposit similar to that seen in Unit D. Faunal remains recovered from Unit E include cow, pig, sheep, turkey, chicken, unidentified birds, opossum, rabbit, squirrel, rat, fish (perch and catfish), crab, and turtle. As was the case with Unit D, some of these faunal remains may represent natural denizens of the area beneath the floorboards, but others are clearly food remains.

To summarize, the test excavations showed that faunal remains, some of which represent food remains, were present beneath the Blossom Point Farmhouse. These faunal remains probably date to the late 19th to early 20th century. Based on the presence of these archeological deposits, additional excavations were recommended.

Research Design and Methods

The faunal remains found beneath the Blossom Point Farmhouse represent a set of data that can be used to study food and diet patterns of the house's inhabitants during the late 19th and early 20th century, and such a study was the main research goal of the additional excavations. The study of foodways and diets at historic archeological sites has been an important research question in eastern North America (e.g., Otto 1977, 1984; Miller 1984; Custer, Catts, and Coleman 1986; Deagan 1982) and special emphasis has been placed upon the consideration of links among diets, foodways, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Although sometimes there are clear-cut links between socioeconomic status and diet (e.g., Otto 1977, 1984), in some cases such links are not as clear-cut as one might believe (e.g., Custer, Catts, and Coleman 1986:152-155; Beidleman, Catts, and Custer 1986). Therefore, an important research activity is the documentation of variability in diets, as revealed by archeological faunal assemblages, at a variety of sites where the socioeconomic status of the occupants is relatively well known. The Blossom Point Farmhouse is one such site.

During the time period represented by the archeological deposits at Blossom Point (late 19th to early 20th century), the house was inhabited by a series of overseers, a special class of tenants (Kise, Franks, and Straw 1990:26-28). In some cases, overseers represent a higher socioeconomic status compared to typical tenant farmers and their food remains reflect this status (Otto 1977, 1984). On the other hand, archival data for the Blossom Point Farm suggest that the socioeconomic status of the overseers was not that high. Although Otto (1977, 1984) has studied one set of faunal remains from an overseers house in coastal Georgia, no similar set of data on overseers has been collected for the Middle Atlantic region. Therefore, the basic goal of the research at Blossom Point Farm was to collect a sample of faunal remains that relate to the known overseer occupation of the house. This assemblage was then compared to collections from other sites in the region, as well as other areas.

In studying the faunal remains from the Blossom Point Farmhouse, it is important to consider the context of the archeological deposits. The test excavations indicated that animals such a cats, rats, and opos-

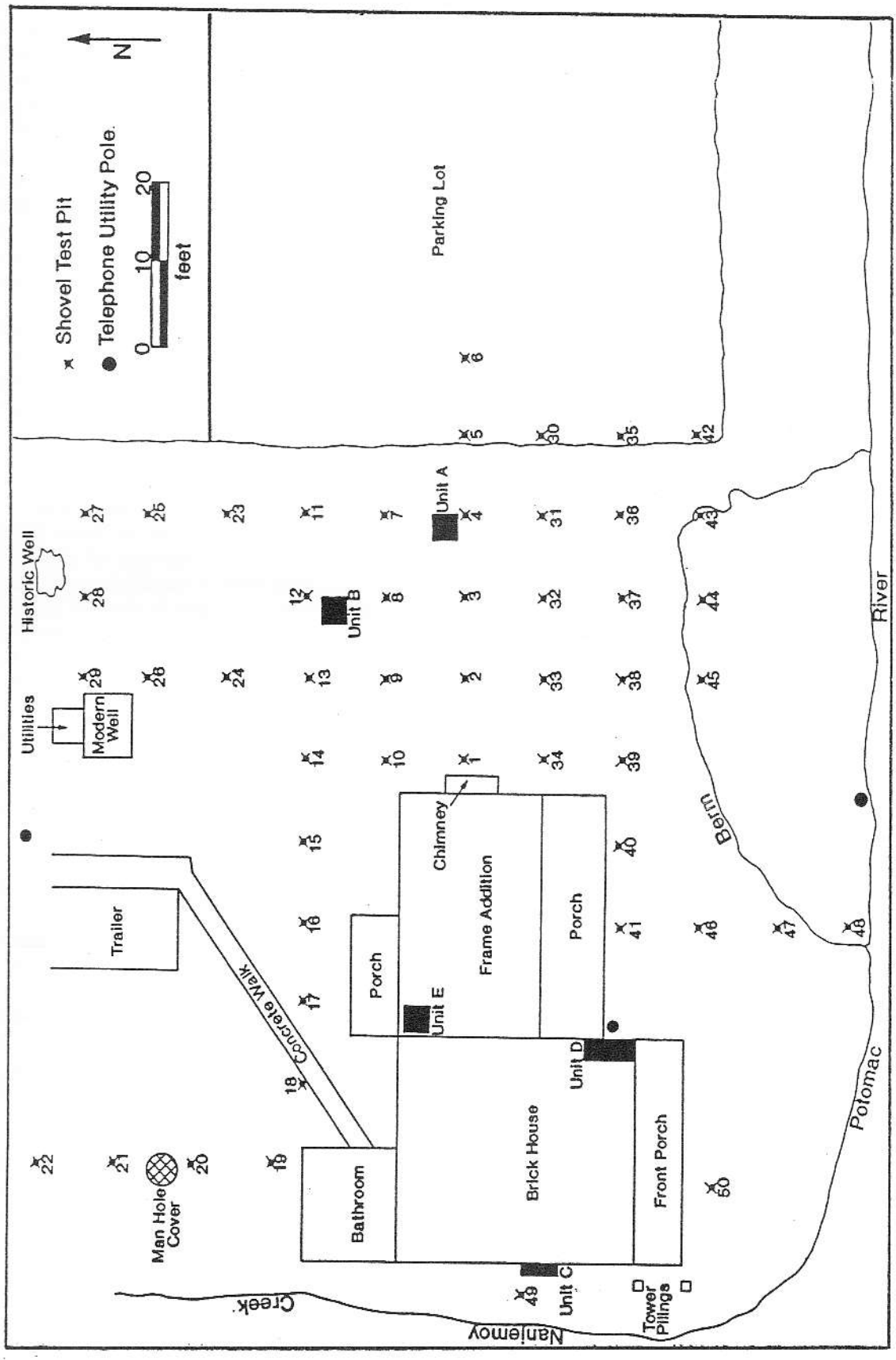

FIGURE 1. Test excavations at the Blossom Point Farmhouse (18CH216).

In the process of removing the flooring of the kitchen wing to excavate the units it was noted that all of the flooring consisted of relatively modern 1" thick tongue-and-groove pine boards. Three layers of this flooring were present and all were secured by relatively modern wire nails. Shims were present in some areas to level the floor. Many of the floor joists had been replaced with pairs of 1" x 4" planks, and some joists were propped up by bricks, rocks, and broken pieces of concrete. All of these features of the flooring indicate that it had recently been replaced, probably during the time period of use of the house for the testing facility office, and these repairs undoubtedly disturbed the sub-floor archeological deposits. Many artifacts of mid-20th century origin were mixed with artifacts of mid-19th century origin further confirming the mixed nature of these soil deposits.

The three units excavated in the East Room of the main block of the house (Figure 2) yielded fewer artifacts than did the units in the kitchen wing. However, Unit 6, located near the fireplace hearth did yield a large amount of oyster shells. The stratigraphy and artifact-bearing soils in this room were identical to those encountered in the kitchen wing and the floor showed the same signs of recent (post-1940) repair.

The two units excavated in the West Room of the main house block (Figure 2) yielded the smallest numbers of artifacts of any excavations units in the house. In fact, Unit 10 did not recover any artifacts because the artifact-bearing soils were not present in this unit. When the flooring over Unit 10 had been removed there was enough room beneath the floor boards to look around the sub-floor section of the room and the tan silty soil was not present in any sections of the room except for a small section near the fireplace.

An additional section of flooring was removed from the small room that links the kitchen wing with the main brick house (Figure 2) and the artifact-bearing soil was completely absent from this room. Therefore no excavations were undertaken here. No excavations were undertaken in the porch areas or in the north stair room of the house due to potential structural instability of the house.

The artifact frequencies varied from room to room, with the kitchen wing having the highest numbers of artifacts, the East Room of the main house showing the next highest frequency, and the West Room showing the lowest frequencies. Because much of the artifact assemblage is dominated by food remains and artifacts associated with food preparation and serving in all rooms, the artifact distribution fits with the inferred functions of the rooms based on the floor plan of the house (Kise, Franks, and Straw 1990). The fireplace configuration in the kitchen is clearly related to food preparation and the large numbers of subsistence-related artifacts in this room is hardly surprising. The East Room of the main house was thought to represent a dining room and the presence of limited subsistence remains fits with this interpretation. The West Room of the main house is probably a formal parlor and the absence of subsistence artifacts in this room is also not surprising.

Figure 3 shows a north-south cross-section of the artifact-bearing soils beneath the floorboards

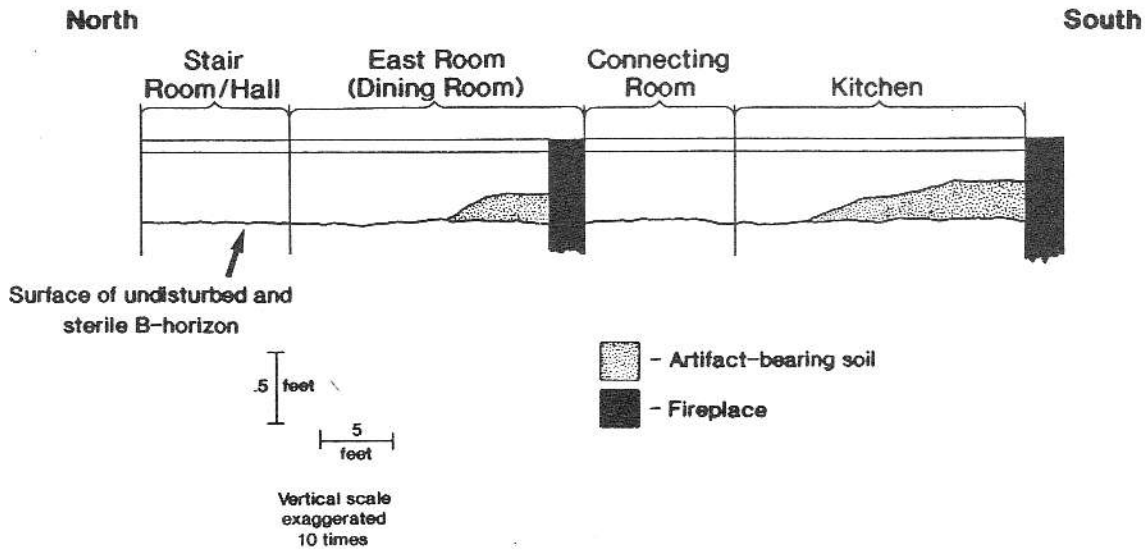

FIGURE 3. Profile of sub-floor deposits.

through the kitchen wing and East Room. These soils are definitely thickest closest to the fireplace hearths and were probably deposited through trap doors close to the hearths. An example of one such trap door was recorded at the similarly dated Hodges Bar Farm House in Kent County, Maryland (Coleman n.d.). No trash pit features extending into the subsoil were identified under the house and the artifacts represent a sub-floor sheet midden. As was noted in the research design, these types of trash and garbage deposits are not uncommon at 19th century sites from a variety of cultural contexts, even though they seem to violate current sensibilities concerning sanitation and health.

Chronology

A variety of artifact types can be used to date the sub-floor deposits at the Blossom Point Farmhouse and each type is discussed below.

Nails are the most plentiful metal artifacts recovered at the site and cover a wide range of time periods. Hand wrought, cut, and wire nails are present and cover a time span of the 18th through the 20th century. The co-occurrence of these nails types underscores the disturbed nature of the archeological deposits. Wire staples and spikes, dating no earlier than the late-19th century are also present.

A variety of fragments of fuses from artillery shells and metal shell casing fragments are also present in the deposits and these artifacts clearly date to the post-1940 military use of the house. Likewise, the presence of a movie film case dated March 1954 within the sub-floor deposits in Unit 3 points to a late date for deposition of some of these soils and artifacts. Film fragments are also present and relate to the same late depositional event.

Coins from the sub-floor deposits include several Wheat Cents with undecipherable dates, a 1960 Lincoln Head Cent, and a Liberty Dime. These coins indicate that some of the deposits date to various times during the 20th century.

Most of the glass artifacts discovered from the Blossom Point Farmhouse sub-floor deposits are not temporally diagnostic; however, a few do have some utility as chronological markers. Mason jar fragments are present and most have screw-top lids indicative of an early to mid-20th century date. Noxema jar fragments are also present indicating a mid-20th century age for some of the deposits. "Carnival Glass" sherds from the 1930s are also present in the assemblage. Numerous fragments of molded patent medicine bottles, including two complete bottles, were discovered and these bottles date to the second half of the 19th century. Finally, one piece of olive bottle glass was present and this fragment looks as if it could be from a wine bottle dating to the late 18th or early 19th century. However, the sherd is too small for positive identification.

Table 2 lists the temporally diagnostic ceramic types found in the excavation units. The major ceramic types identified are transfer-print porcelain, whiteware, transfer-printed pearlware, and American blue and gray stoneware. Mean ceramic dates were calculated for the kitchen (1852), the East Room (1862), and the entire sub-floor artifact assemblage (1854). These dates all cluster around the middle of the 19th century and match well with the mean ceramic date of the ceramics in the yard scatter outside the house (1857 — Kise, Franks, and Straw 1990:36).

The artifact assemblages from the sub-floor deposits at the Blossom Point Farmhouse show a mix of artifacts dating to the 19th and 20th centuries. Some of the artifacts clearly date to the use of the house as an office for the military testing activities on the farm and, therefore, post-date 1942. The consistent mid-19th century mean ceramic dates indicate that the bulk of the artifact assemblage probably dates to the middle and later portions of the 19th century. However, subsequent repairs to the floors during the military use of the house introduced numerous later artifacts into the assemblage. The later artifacts introduced to the

TABLE 2. Diagnostic ceramics.

TEST UNIT	PORCELAIN	WHITEWARE	PEARLWARE	AMERICAN BLUE & GRAY STONEWARE
1	0	24	0	0
2	1	5	7	1
3	1	9	3	1
4	0	4	1	0
5	0	3	2	2
6	1	15	0	0
7	0	4	0	0
8	0	1	0	0
9	0	0	0	0
D	0	0	0	0
E	1	8	1	1
TOTALS				
Kitchen	3	53	13	5
West Room	0	0	0	0
East Room	1	20	0	0
Total House	4	73	13	5

assemblage generally include some glass, plastic items, wire nails, spikes, and staples, and military items.

Artifact Assemblage Composition

The artifacts from the site were grouped into classes following the system described by South (1977) to allow an analysis of the composition of the assemblage. Table 3 shows the listings of the artifact types by groups and notes the percentage calculations. Figure 4 depicts the same data.

The frequencies of artifact classes can be compared among the kitchen, East Room, and West Room in order to see if artifact distributions reflect room function. One major reflection of room function can be seen in gross numbers of artifacts. Table 4 shows the mean numbers of artifacts from Table 3 per room for the three rooms. The total numbers of artifacts were used along with an adjusted artifact count that removed window glass. Window glass was removed from the count because Unit 7 in the East Room contained very high window glass counts due to its location immediately under a window (see Table 3). Table 4 shows that the artifact counts for the East Room and the kitchen are very similar. The East Room was inferred from its location in the building plan as a dining room and its similarity to the kitchen is not too surprising. However, the high artifact counts in the dining room suggest that trash was frequently discarded in this room. The discard of trash in the dining room with a frequency almost equal to that of the kitchen indicates that the trash deposition was not a component of functional differentiation of these two rooms for the mid- to late 19th century inhabitants of the house.

The West Room has a much lower frequency of artifacts than either the dining room or the kitchen, probably due to its inferred function as a formal living room or parlor. In this case, trash disposal by the site's inhabitants does differentiate room function. The artifact frequencies seem to show that trash was discarded within the room where it was produced, including the dining room, which in many cases was a rather formalized social setting (Forman 1934; Herman 1987).

The relative frequencies of three major artifact classes (Kitchen, Faunal, and Architecture) were compared among the three rooms to see if there were significant differences related to room function. A category of combined kitchen and faunal classes was also compared. Figure 4 illustrates the different percentages of the artifact classes. A difference-of-proportion test (Parsons 1974) was used to see if the differences in percentages were truly statistically significant. Application of this statistical test is important in this case because the sample sizes of the assemblages are quite varied. Variation in sample size can often produce

TABLE 3. Artifact categories.

ARTIFACT GROUP	KITCHEN	EAST ROOM	WEST ROOM	TOTAL
Kitchen Group				
Ceramics	82	23	0	105
Botttles	47	57	1	105
Tumblers	1	0	0	1
Pharm. Bottles	2	6	2	10
Glassware	6	9	0	15
Tableware	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	139 (23%)	95 (25%)	3 (12%)	237 (23%)
Faunal Group				
Bone	171	21	8	200
Shell	54	54	1	109
TOTAL	225 (37%)	75 (20%)	9 (36%)	309 (31%)
Architecture Group				
Window Glass	50	127	2	179
Nails	159	36	5	200
Spikes	1	2	0	3
Constr. Hrdwre.	8	6	0	14
TOTAL	218 (36%)	171 (45%)	7 (28%)	396 (39%)
Arms Group	3 (<1%)	5 (13%)	1 (4%)	9 (1%)
Clothing Group				
Buckles	3	2	0	5
Pins	1	2	0	3
Buttons	11	13	3	27
TOTAL	15 (2%)	17 (4%)	3 (12%)	35 (3%)
Personal Group				
Coins	0	4	0	4
Keys	1	1	0	2
TOTAL	1 (<1%)	5 (1%)	0 (0%)	6 (<1%)
Tobacco Group				
Pipes	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	0 (0%)	2 (<1%)
Activities Group				
Toys	5 (1%)	8 (2%)	2 (8%)	15 (1%)

TABLE 4. Artifacts per excavation unit.

ROOM	TOTAL ARTIFACTS/UNIT	TOTAL ARTIFACTS/UNIT (NOT INCL. WINDOW GLASS)
Kitchen	101	92
East	125	83
West	8	8

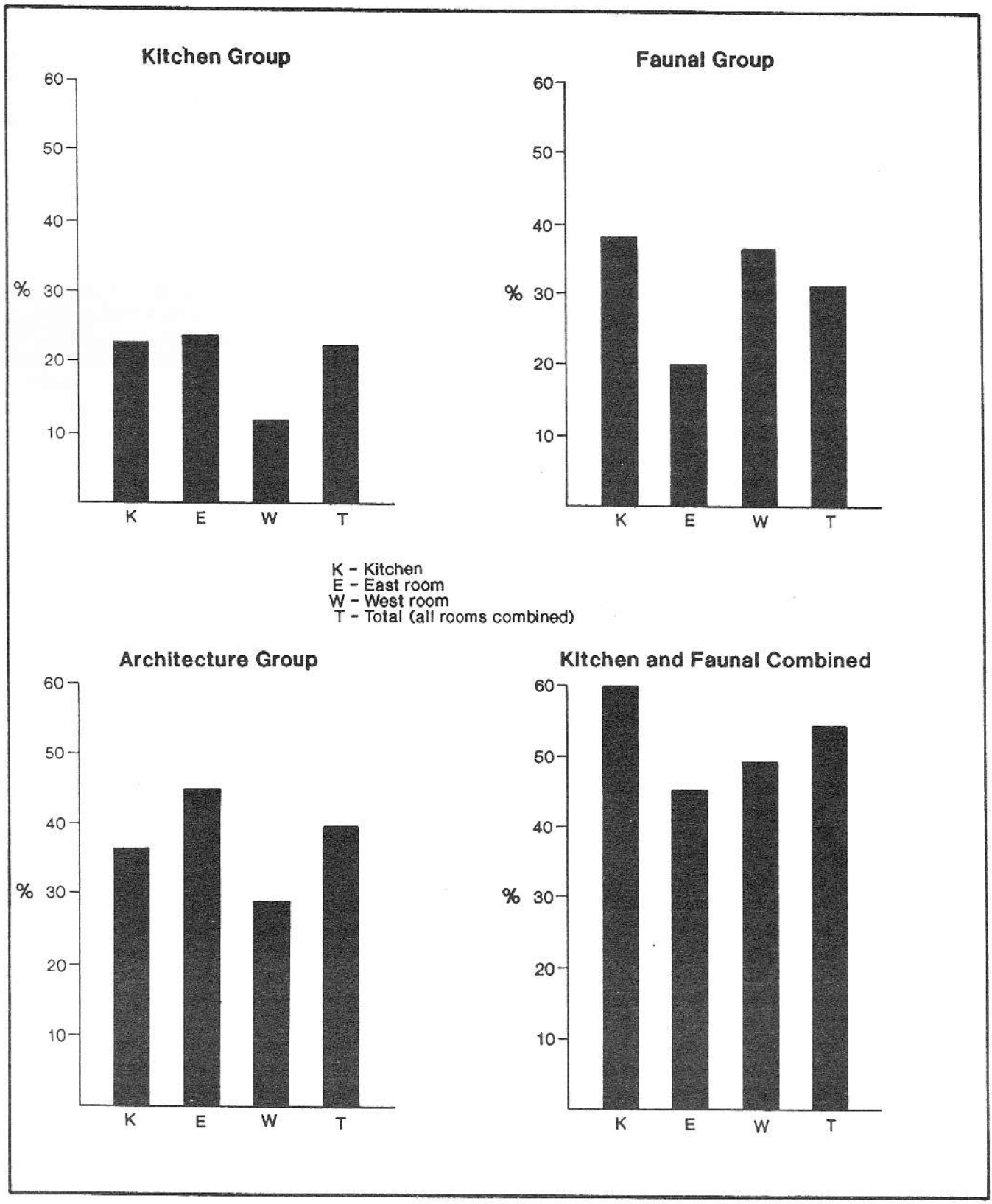

FIGURE 4. Artifact group comparisons.

percentage differences that are more apparent than real. The difference of proportion test accounts for these differences and provides an assessment of whether or not the perceived differences in percentage values could have arisen by chance given the small sample sizes. In the Blossom Point case, the very small sample from the West Room is the major complicating factor. The complete test statistics are provided in Custer (1993:Table 7).

No significant differences were noted among the rooms with respect to the kitchen group; however, the absence of a significant difference in the West Room is a direct result of sample size. Analysis of the faunal group data showed that there was a significantly higher proportion of faunal remains in the kitchen compared to the East Room. The West Room again provides anomalous results due to small sample size. The East Room percentages of architectural remains were significantly higher than the kitchen; however, this pattern is probably due to large amounts of window glass in Unit 7. Analysis of distributions of architectural remains was not especially revealing in any parts of the house because nails comprise the majority of these assemblages, except for Unit 7, and their presence is almost certainly related to the post-1942 refurbishing of the floors throughout the house. Analysis of percentages of the kitchen and faunal classes combined also showed that the kitchen had significantly higher percentages of these categories than the East Room. Again, results from the West Room had to be discounted due to small sample size.

Analysis of artifact class distributions shows that even though refuse was discarded in both the dining room and kitchen, the percentages of artifacts and faunal remains were highest in the kitchen, as would be expected. The presence of some other artifact classes in the dining room (East Room) indicates that general refuse was discarded here as well. Small sample sizes make it difficult to discuss percentage distribution patterns in the West Room; however, it can be noted that the highest proportions of clothing remains, notably buttons, was present in this room suggesting that sewing took place in this living room, or parlor.

Faunal Remains

The report on the test excavations (Kise, Franks, and Straw 1990) noted that the faunal assemblage from the Blossom Point Farmhouse included a number of remains that were clearly food remains. However, it also included a number of bone remains of animals who were probably living in the small space beneath the floorboards of the house. Before discussing the foodways of the site's inhabitants based on the faunal remains, it is important to factor out these non-food species. Almost certainly the cat, rat, and mouse remains are natural denizens of the sub-floor area and are not considered to be food remains. Rabbit and opossum remains may be food refuse. However, opossums could be living under the house, and given the low frequency of opossum remains, its food use is problematic. Also, given the low frequency of rabbit remains, it is possible that they could be living under the house. It is also possible that the few rabbit bones could be under the house as a result of predators like cats, whose bones were also present in the assemblage. Therefore, the use of rabbit as a food source is problematic. Equally problematic are turtle remains. Muskrat remains were also recovered from beneath the house. Their presence may be due to discard of carcasses of animals that were trapped for their skins, and for food use. Clear-cut food remains from beneath the house included cow, pig, sheep, duck, turkey, chicken, shore birds, crab, fish, and oyster.

The sample of faunal remains from the site is too small to apply analytical techniques such as minimum numbers of individuals, biomass calculations, allometric analysis, or even percentage comparisons. However, some general trends can be noted and their implications for the historic foodways of the site's inhabitants assessed.

Cow, pig, and sheep are present in the faunal assemblage and all were raised on the farm according to the 1860 Agricultural Census (Table 1). For domesticated animals, analysis of body parts present and cutting and sawing patterns provides an indication of food procurement and preparation activities. If home butchering takes place, head and body parts not associated with steaks, roasts, or soup bone cuts are present. A common pattern is for steaks, roasts, and soup bone cuts to be sold to markets with other, less marketable, body parts consumed at home. If steak, roast, and soup bone cuts are present along with heads and less marketable body parts, it indicates that home butchering took place strictly for home consumption. If only steak, roast, or soup bone cuts are present, it indicates that the site's inhabitants were probably buying meat cuts within some kind of market economy.

At Blossom Point, cow bones are mainly limited to sawn bones from the proximal femur joint, a common soup bone cut. There are no indications of other body parts except for a few rib fragments. The absence of head and non-marketable body parts suggests that on-site butchering of cattle did not take place and that soup bone cuts were procured from a market system. Bones associated with steaks and roasts are

ants. However, they were also different from plantation owners and other higher socioeconomic categories. Overseers occupied a "middle ground" where they could afford to consume better meat cuts from swine, but not from cattle. It was necessary to supplement their diet with wild food sources; however, they were unable to use the higher status wild food sources such as venison.

With regard to material culture items, overseers were clearly not wealthy individuals. The archival data from Blossom Point show that the overseers were subject to the vagaries of rural economies and were part of the rural poverty that characterized all of the Blossom Point tenants. However, they were able to differentiate themselves from other tenants in terms of food and diet and occupy a "middle ground" between poorer tenants and slaves, and property owners. In some ways, this "middle ground" is symbolic of the functional relationship occupied by overseers. These individuals operated as collectors of rents for the owners and mediated the relationships between tenants and owners. In a similar way, overseers at plantations with slaves mediated the slave/owner relationship by conveying the orders and demands of owners to slaves and enforcing compliance with those orders. Future studies of overseer sites could attempt to investigate further the mediating role of overseers and the expression of this role in faunal and artifact assemblages. On a local note it would be useful to investigate the artifact and faunal remains from one of the tenant sites from Blossom Point in particular or St. Thomas Manor in general, or even the sites of the Jesuit owners of the property, in order to see if local data confirm the view of overseers as "mediators."

Acknowledgements

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TABLE 5. Oyster shell data.

ATTRIBUTE	KITCHEN No. (%)	EAST ROOM No. (%)
Size		
Small	14 (32)	2 (4)
Medium	26 (60)	41 (76)
Large	3 (8)	11 (20)
Attachment Scars		
Yes	36 (82)	53 (96)
No	8 (18)	2 (4)
Bore Holes		
No Holes	34 (77)	41 (76)
Large Holes	4 (9)	8 (15)
Large and Small Holes	2 (4)	1 (2)
Small	3 (7)	3 (5)
Clam	1 (3)	1 (2)
Ribbing		
Yes	41 (95)	52 (95)
No	2 (5)	3 (5)
Shell Type		
Bed	42 (95)	52 (94)
Channel	2 (5)	2 (4)
Reef	0 (0)	1 (2)
Season-of-Death		
Early Spring	18 (44)	15 (27)
Summer	4 (10)	10 (18)
Fall	19 (46)	30 (55)

such dense beds are present near the site at the mouth of the Port Tobacco River.

Because they cannot move, oysters attract a large number of parasites and predators, some of which bore holes through the oyster shells via varied biological mechanisms to attack the oysters and consume their meat. Most of these parasites and predators have limited tolerances for water salinity and leave distinctive marks and bore holes on the shells that they have attacked. Therefore, by identifying the parasites from the bore holes it is possible to ascertain the salinity within which the oysters were growing. Figure 5 shows that most of the oyster shells in both assemblages show no signs of parasites. Kent (1984:41) notes that the absence of parasites on the majority of shells indicates that the local water salinity was less than 10 parts per thousand for most of the year with the salinity rarely rising above 20 parts per thousand. Small proportions of the shells do show some signs of parasites including various species of the sponge *Cliona*; however, these are not frequent enough in the sample to change the assessment of the water salinity. Lippson (1973) notes that most of the lower Potomac estuary north of the Port Tobacco River falls within the salinity range noted above. Therefore, most of the oysters were probably derived from local sources.

Figure 6 notes that most of the shells in both assemblages show signs of ribbing on their external surfaces. Ribbing develops on shells that are exposed to ultraviolet light in shallow water; therefore, the shells in both Blossom Point assemblages are derived from shallow water. Oyster shells take on different shapes based on the environments that they grow in and Figure 6 shows that almost all of the oysters in both assemblages are "bed" oysters that grew on clay or sandy bottoms. Growth lines on the hinges of oyster shells provide information on the season-of-death of the oysters and Figure 6 shows that both assemblages contain roughly equal amounts of oysters collected in the early spring and fall.

In sum, both oyster assemblages from the Blossom Point Farmhouse are very similar. Both were collected during the cold weather months from healthy, shallow water beds in the local area that had not previously been heavily harvested.

Faunal data from the Blossom Point Farmhouse indicate that the site's inhabitants consumed a diet that included both wild and domesticated food sources. Among the domesticated species, most seem to be home-raised and butchered, including pigs and chickens. However, lower-priced cuts of beef were purchased for the cooking of soups or stews. For wild game, a variety of fish and shellfish, and possibly birds and mammals, from the local surrounding wetlands and waters of the Potomac estuary were procured and consumed. Deer are absent from the wild animal faunal assemblage, and this absence is curious given the fact that venison was a major wild food source in southern Maryland during historic times (Miller 1984, 1986).

Floral Remains

A small amount of plant food remains were recovered from the excavations at the Blossom Point Farmhouse. In spite of the use of 1/8" mesh water-screening and flotation, very few plant food remains were recovered. In fact, all of the plant food remains recovered were found during the use of 1/4" mesh screens. No plant food remains were recovered from the smaller screen meshes. The absence of plant food remains in the samples processed through smaller mesh screens indicates that the preservation of small organic items was not good in the sub-floor deposits, an observation that is understandable given the degree of disturbance of these deposits noted earlier. Given the

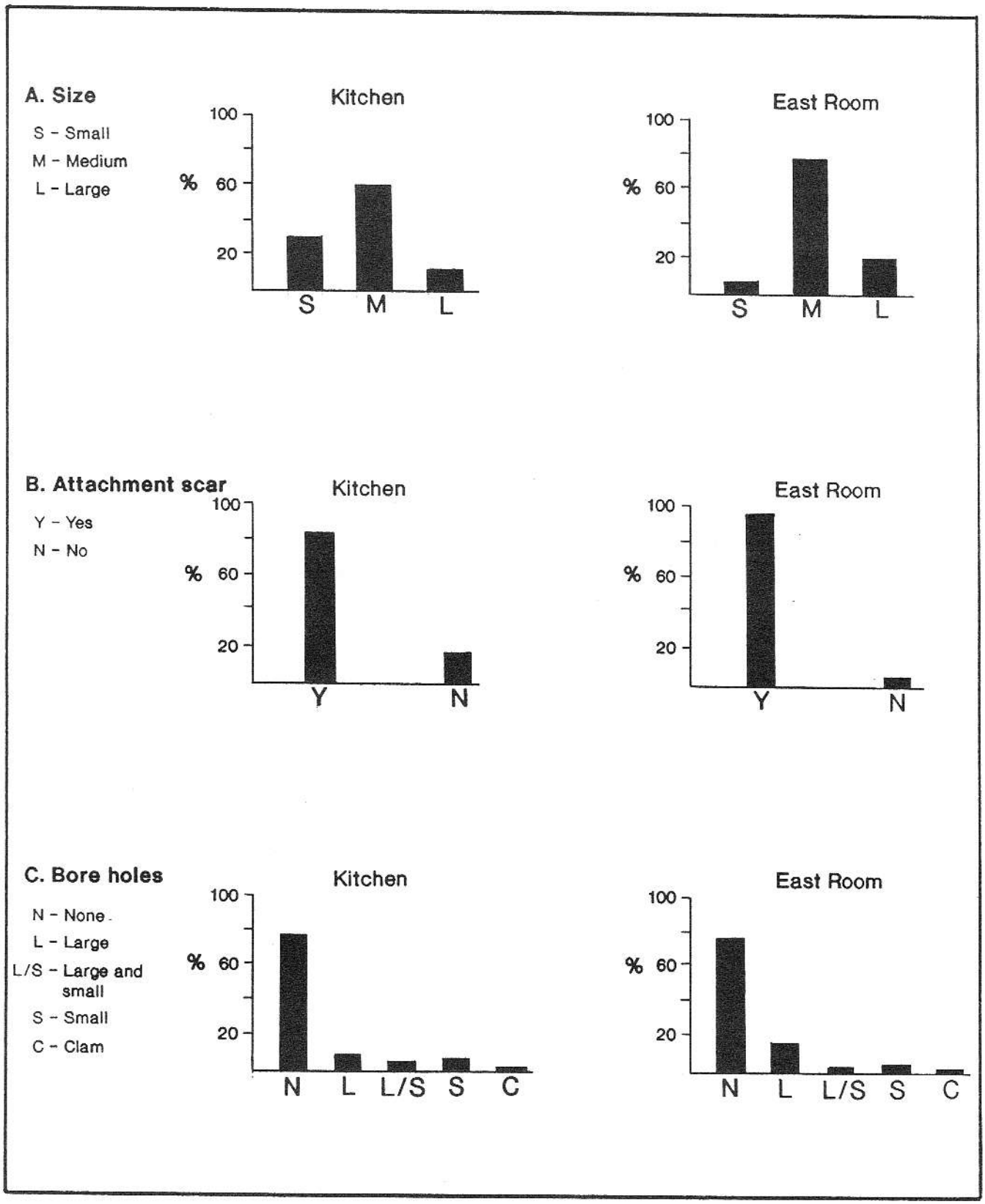

FIGURE 5. Oyster shell data: size, attachment scars, bore holes.

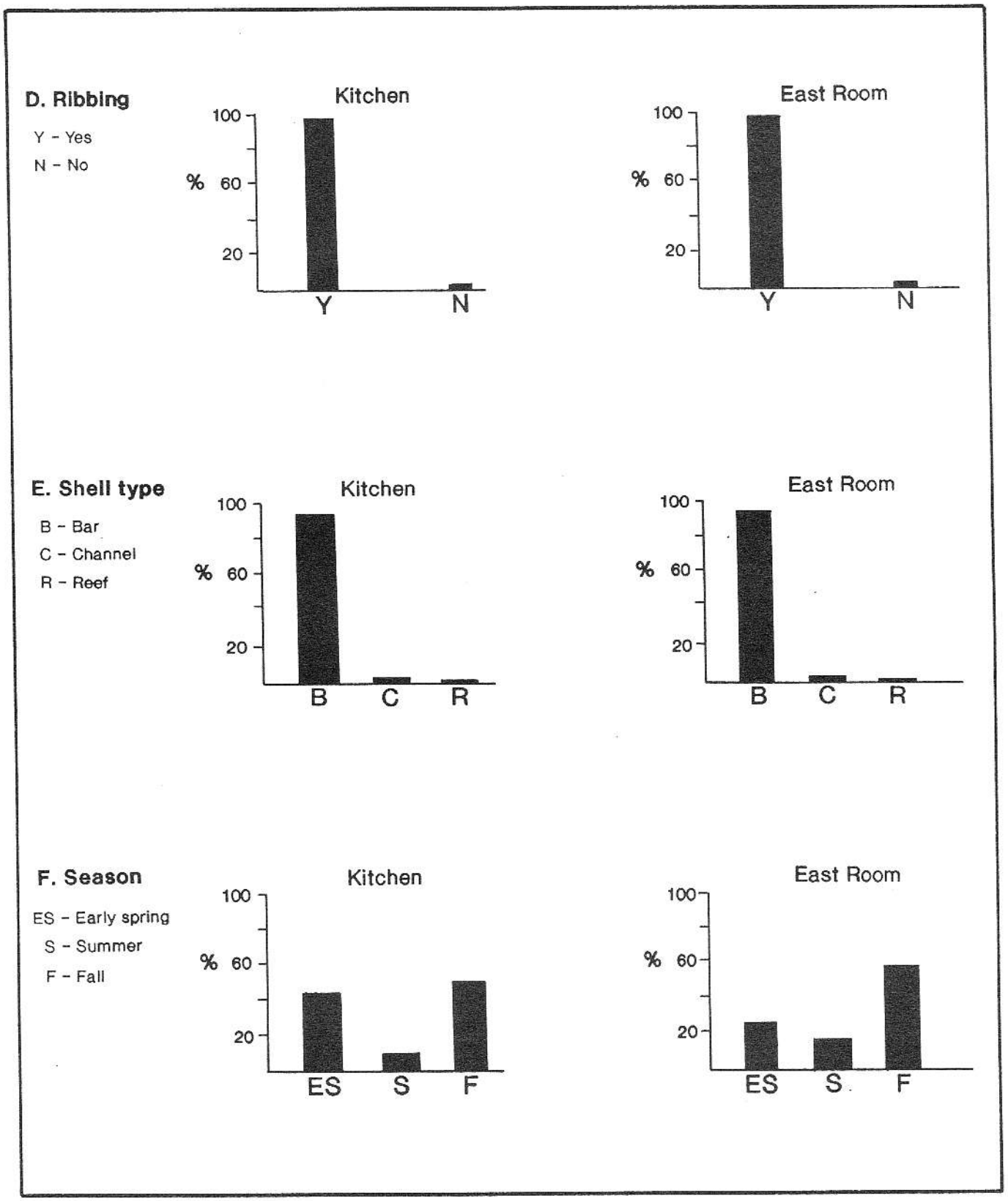

FIGURE 6. Oyster shell data: ribbing, shell type, season-of-death.

poor preservation, the sample of floral remains is almost certainly biased. Furthermore, some of the animal inhabitants of the space beneath the floorboards of the house may have brought seeds and nuts into their nests. Therefore, the most that can be done to analyze the floral remains is to note the varieties present and be aware that they all may not necessarily be food remains of the site's human inhabitants.

The floral remains recovered from the excavations included peanut shell, persimmon seeds, hickory nut shells, chestnut shells, walnut shells, and peach pits. The persimmon seeds are the most problematic human food remain among the floral remains because they are a common food of various rodents. The hickory nuts, chestnuts, and walnuts could have been found in the local woods. Peach trees could also easily have been present on the farm because the 1860 Agricultural Census (Table 1) notes the presence of orchards on most of the farms of St. Thomas Manor, including Blossom Point.

Comparisons with Other Sites

The ceramic artifact assemblage and the faunal assemblage can be compared to other sites to assess the relative socioeconomic status of the inhabitants of the Blossom Point farmhouse. Although it would be useful to compare the Blossom Point Farmhouse with other farms on Cedar Neck, or in other parts of the local area, no local archeological data are available for comparison. Therefore, it is necessary to consider data from a number of sites from a wider area.

The system of site comparisons used here follows the format developed at the University of Delaware Center for Archaeological Research (see discussion in Catts and Custer 1990). This format is based on numerous other historic archeological studies and seeks to identify patterning in the similarities and differences of artifact and faunal distributions among sites where the socioeconomic statuses of the sites' inhabitants can be surmised from archival research. The sites used in the comparative analyses were chosen because they had archival data to indicate relative socioeconomic statuses, and because they had artifact and faunal distribution data reported in a format consistent with the University of Delaware Center for Archaeological Research system.

Comparison of artifact assemblages focused on ceramics. Otto (1977, 1984), Deetz (1977), and others (Spencer-Wood 1987) have noted that certain types of ceramics, mainly types based on functional varieties, can be correlated with certain aspects of socioeconomic status. Table 6 lists the historic archeological sites used in this comparison and Table 7 lists the ceramic data used in the analysis.

TABLE 6. Sites used in comparative analysis.

SITE	ETHNIC GROUP AND DATE	REFERENCE
Weeksville A	black urban, 1835-1875	Brigens & Salwen 1980
Weeksville B	black urban, 1875-1900	Brigens & Salwen 1980
Heisler	black tenant, 1830-1870	Catts, et al. 1989
Dickson II	black tenant, 1850-1900	Catts, et al. 1989
Evans-Black	white tenant, 1800-1840	Catts and Custer 1990
Williams-Stump	black tenant, 1830-1870	Catts and Custer 1990
Whitten Road	white tenant, 1750-1850	Shaffer et al. 1988
Charles Allen	white owner, 1800-1850	Basalik et al. 1987
Cannon's Point I	black slave, 1800-1830	Otto 1984
Cannon's Point II	white overseer, 1800-1830	Otto 1984
Cannon Point's III	white plantation owner, 1800-1830	Otto 1984

Comparison of flat wares versus hollow wares provides an indication of diets. Otto (1984) notes that a preponderance of hollow wares, such as bowls and cups, indicates that diets are more likely to have included soups, stews, and gruels rather than foods served on flat ware plates. The emphasis on stews, soups, and gruels in diets is associated with lower socioeconomic status (Otto 1984). Table 8 shows the ranking of the various sites based on percentage of hollow wares. Application of the difference-of-proportion test (Custer 1993:Table 13) showed that the sites can be placed into two groups. One group consists of the Blossom Point Farmhouse assemblage and assemblages from a white overseer's house and a white plantation owner's house. For all of these sites hollow wares account for less than 30% of the ceramic assemblage. All other sites comprise the second group with hollow wares comprising more than 50%, and sometimes up to 70%, of the assemblages. Three black tenant sites have the highest percentages of hollow wares within this group.

Proportions of hollow wares seem to be a fairly reliable indicator of dietary, and perhaps socioeconomic status. The overseer and plantation owner sites, which presumably occupy the highest socioeconomic statuses, fall together as a separate group with the lowest hollow ware frequencies. The Blossom

TABLE 7. Ceramic data used in comparative analysis.

SITE	FLATWARE	HOLLOW WARE	SERVING	STORAGE/ PREPARATION	CUPS	MUGS/ JUGS
Blossom Point	12 (71)	5 (29)	15 (88)	2 (12)	3 (60)	2 (40)
Weeksville A	—	—	404 (57)	306 (43)	—	—
Weeksville B	—	—	1000 (81)	235 (19)	—	—
Heisler	108 (38)	173 (62)	132 (83)	28 (18)	60 (97)	2 (3)
Dickson II	14 (29)	34 (71)	32 (71)	13 (29)	10 (100)	0 (0)
Evans-Black	70 (41)	99 (59)	118 (72)	45 (28)	13 (65)	7 (35)
Williams-Stump	97 (37)	153 (63)	156 (64)	88 (36)	13 (87)	2 (13)
Whitten Road	118 (41)	168 (59)	95 (48)	104 (52)	37 (71)	15 (29)
Charles Allen	188 (46)	223 (54)	323 (58)	235 (42)	45 (62)	28 (38)
Cannon's Pt. I	(47)	(53)	(94)	(6)	(84)	(16)
Cannon's Pt. II	(75)	(25)	(96)	(4)	(96)	(4)
Cannon's Pt. III	(91)	(9)	(82)	(18)	(96)	(4)

Values in () are percentages. Percentages only available from Cannon's Point Plantation.

Point overseer's assemblage and Cannon's Point assemblage show very similar values. In contrast, black tenant sites, which would be on the lower end of the socioeconomic status continuum, have the highest frequencies of hollow wares and are grouped together. It is interesting to note that the Cannon's Point slave assemblage does not show the lowest frequencies of hollow wares. In fact, among the sites within the group with high hollow ware frequencies, the slave assemblage shows the lowest value. The fact that the slave site hollow ware values are not the highest values could also be due to their placement within a plantation economic system.

TABLE 8. Hollow ware ranking.

SITE	%	ETHNIC/STATUS	DATE
Dickson II	71	Black tenant	1830-1870
Williams-Stump	63	Black tenant	1830-1870
Heisler	62	Black tenant	1830-1870
Evans-Black	59	White tenant	1800-1840
Whitten Road	59	White tenant	1750-1850
Charles Allen	54	White owner	1800-1850
Cannon's Pt. I	53	Black slave	1800-1830
Blossom Point	29	White overseer	1850-1900
Cannon's Pt. II	25	White overseer	1800-1830
Cannon's Pt. III	9	White plantation owner	1800-1830

Relative frequencies of storage and preparation vessels in relation to serving vessels are also seen as indicators of varied socioeconomic status. Higher frequencies of storage vessels have been linked to black-occupied sites and other sites occupied by groups of lower socioeconomic status (Deetz 1977). However, other studies which tested this association (Geismar 1982; Catts and Custer 1990) found that this association was not always present. Table 9 shows the ranking of the sites based on storage/preparation vessel frequencies. These rankings also reflect the reverse ranking of serving vessel frequencies because both cat-

TABLE 9. Storage/preparation vessel rankings.

SITE	%	ETHNIC/STATUS	DATE
Whitten Road	52	White tenant	1750-1850
Weeksville A	43	Black urban	1835-1875
Charles Allen	42	White owner	1800-1850
Williams-Stump	36	Black tenant	1830-1870
Dickson II	29	Black tenant	1850-1900
Evans-Black	28	White tenant	1800-1840
Weeksville B	19	Black urban	1875-1900
Heisler	18	Black tenant	1830-1870
Cannon's Pt. III	18	White plantation owner	1800-1830
Blossom Point	12	White overseer	1850-1900
Cannon's Point I	6	Black slave	1800-1830
Cannon's Point II	4	White overseer	1800-1830

egories are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. No apparent clusterings of sites of similar socioeconomic status or ethnic affiliation are apparent and this finding supports the views of Geismar (1982) and Catts and Custer (1990) who suggest that the proportions of serving and storage/preparation vessels are not good measures of socioeconomic status or ethnic affiliation. However, it can be noted that the two overseer sites are very close in their ranks and have low frequencies of storage/preparation vessels and high frequencies of serving vessels.

Relative frequencies of cups in relation to mugs and jugs have also been suggested as a measure of socioeconomic status (Spencer-Wood 1987) with higher frequencies of cups associated with higher socioeconomic statuses. Table 10 shows the cup frequency rankings, and for all of the sites cups comprise more than 50% of the assemblages. There is no apparent grouping of sites of similar socioeconomic status and this measure is not seen as a useful analytical category given the high values seen for all sites.

In sum, the comparative site data show that two common measures of ceramic assemblage variability and its relation to socioeconomic status are not especially useful. Similar results, or lack thereof, have been noted in other studies (e.g., Geismar 1982; Catts and Custer 1990). The reason for this lack of utility is the simple fact that the initial proposed value of such measures was usually based on theoretical considerations derived from the analysis of archival data. However, when the hypothetical relationships are tested with real archeological data, they do not always hold true.

Hollow ware rankings do provide some useful information, however. The Blossom Point assemblage was separated from a number of "typical" tenant sites of varied ethnic affiliation based on hollow ware frequencies and was grouped with another overseer site and that of a plantation owner. These data suggest that the dietary patterns of the Blossom Point Farmhouse inhabitants were more similar to those of individuals of higher socioeconomic status than they were to lower ranking groups.

TABLE 10. Cup frequency ranking.

SITE	%	ETHNIC/STATUS	DATE
Dickson II	100	Black tenant	1830-1870
Heisler	97	Black tenant	1830-1870
Cannon's Point II	96	White overseer	1800-1830
Cannon's Point III	96	White plantation owner	1800-1830
Williams-Stump	87	Black tenant	1830-1870
Cannon's Point I	84	Black slave	1800-1830
Whitten Road	71	White tenant	1750-1850
Charles Allen	62	White overseer	1800-1850
Blossom Point	60	White overseer	1850-1900

The faunal assemblage from Blossom Point is too small to allow the explicit comparison of frequencies of the various taxa represented. However, some general comparisons to other sites can be made. An important comparison can be made with the Cannon Point Plantation sites described by Otto (1984). Otto explicitly compared faunal assemblages from slave, overseer, and plantation owner sites at a Georgia sea isle plantation and noted interesting patterns of dietary differences. All inhabitants of the plantation consumed basically the same types of animals as food. However, the meat cuts and proportions of varied foods consumed did vary. The overseer and plantation owners ate more beef than did slaves and tended to consume better cuts of meats. Meat cuts associated with soups, stews, and gruels were more commonly used by the slaves compared to the plantation owner and overseer. However, the overseer had fewer high quality meat cuts than the owner. Wild animal food sources were consumed by all three groups; however, the plantation owner's wild food assemblage was dominated by deer and oyster.

The Blossom Point assemblage fits well with the patterns noted by Otto. The Blossom Point overseers were supplementing their diet with a variety of wild food sources as were the Cannon's Point overseers and slaves. This supplement did not, however, include deer. Apparently venison was more of a higher status wild food source. The Blossom Point and Cannon's Point overseer assemblages also share a focus on marshes and wetlands as a prime source of wild food supplements. With regard to domesticated animals, the Blossom Point and Cannon's Point overseer assemblages show that swine were a major food source and that both high and low quality meat cuts were consumed. In contrast, the plantation owners consumed only high quality meat cuts and slaves consumed only low quality meat cuts. For beef, however, both slaves and overseers consumed low quality cuts while owners consumed mainly high quality meat cuts. Domesticated fowl were present in all assemblages.

Comparison of the Blossom Point ceramic and faunal assemblages shows that the overseers of Blossom Point were very similar to overseers from the Cannon Point plantation, especially in terms of foodways and diet. Overseers were clearly different in their foodways and diets from slaves and "regular" ten-

ants. However, they were also different from plantation owners and other higher socioeconomic categories. Overseers occupied a "middle ground" where they could afford to consume better meat cuts from swine, but not from cattle. It was necessary to supplement their diet with wild food sources; however, they were unable to use the higher status wild food sources such as venison.

With regard to material culture items, overseers were clearly not wealthy individuals. The archival data from Blossom Point show that the overseers were subject to the vagaries of rural economies and were part of the rural poverty that characterized all of the Blossom Point tenants. However, they were able to differentiate themselves from other tenants in terms of food and diet and occupy a "middle ground" between poorer tenants and slaves, and property owners. In some ways, this "middle ground" is symbolic of the functional relationship occupied by overseers. These individuals operated as collectors of rents for the owners and mediated the relationships between tenants and owners. In a similar way, overseers at plantations with slaves mediated the slave/owner relationship by conveying the orders and demands of owners to slaves and enforcing compliance with those orders. Future studies of overseer sites could attempt to investigate further the mediating role of overseers and the expression of this role in faunal and artifact assemblages. On a local note it would be useful to investigate the artifact and faunal remains from one of the tenant sites from Blossom Point in particular or St. Thomas Manor in general, or even the sites of the Jesuit owners of the property, in order to see if local data confirm the view of overseers as "mediators."

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