

The Armstrong Farmstead (15Fa185): Stonewares and Refined Earthenwares as Indicators of Consumer Behavior and Economic Systems

Rose G. Moore
Deborah L. Rotman

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Abstract

Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. was contracted by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet to complete Phase II and III archaeological investigations at the Armstrong Farmstead (15Fa185) on Paris Pike in Fayette County in 2001 and 2002. A variety of interesting ceramic wares and patterns were observed. The stonewares appeared to represent unusual vessel forms, suggesting purchase from local manufacturers. In addition, these ceramic sherds were distinctly distributed across the site. However, the refined earthenwares – many of which possessed maker's marks from England – suggested that the Armstrong family was connected to broader commercial markets. This paper examines the ceramic data from these investigations and presents a preliminary interpretation of consumer choices made by the family that highlight their social position and engagement in economic systems.

Introduction

Stonewares and refined earthenwares – as other papers today have shown – are particularly useful material classes for interpreting archaeological assemblages and understanding the past. Preliminary analyses of the ceramic data from the Armstrong site revealed information about consumer choices made by the family, their social position, and the degree to which they may have been engaged in larger economic processes.

[SLIDE – site map] The Armstrong Farmstead was occupied by John and Mary Armstrong and their descendents from ca. 1846 until after the turn of the twentieth century. John (age 57) was a physician and a farmer, while Mary (age 41) was a seamstress (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1860a). [SLIDE – historic map] The Armstrong home was located along the Lexington-Maysville Pike, an important transportation corridor during the nineteenth century (McBride and McBride 1990:600). A former manager for the current Clovelly farm indicated that a well at the western edge of the site was the half-way point between Paris and Lexington (LeRoy LeCour, pers. comm. 2002). As such, passers-by would stop at the farm to water their horses. Nancy O'Malley

(1987:88) reported similar findings, suggesting that, since a tollhouse had been located across the street, the well may have been used to water horses from stagecoaches. Paris Pike, therefore, connected the Armstrong family to commercial markets for acquiring material goods as well as linked them to larger social and economic networks.

This paper examines the stonewares and refined earthenwares from the site. Since the fieldwork of the phase III investigation of the farmstead was just completed two weeks ago, preliminary interpretations of the Armstrong farmstead are based on the artifacts from the phase II testing conducted last summer as well as field observations from the recent phase III work. The results presented here are tentative and will be further tested as analyses proceed in coming months.

Questions of Interest

[SLIDE – excavation] All of the refined earthenwares and a number of the stoneware fragments analyzed for this presentation were recovered from a series of hand-excavated 1 x 1 m test units. Cultural deposits were removed in 5 cm levels and screened through ¼” mesh. The rest of the stonewares were recovered from backhoe trenches excavated during the Phase II and Phase III investigations.

This fieldwork was undertaken with a variety of salient research questions in mind. (For a complete discussion of the research design, see Day and Rotman 2001.) For example, to what degree was the Armstrong family engaged in local, regional, and global economic systems? What were the commercial goods to which the family had access? And how did these objects express their social position, particularly their class status? What else might the ceramics from the site reveal about the social relations and ideologies of site occupants?

Stonewares

[SLIDE – Examples] Stoneware by definition is a heavy, dense, opaque ceramic. The outer surface of the clay body vitrifies during the high temperature firing (1200° to 1300°C), making the wares waterproof. Made of better quality clays than coarse earthenware and redware, stoneware

vessels were more durable and heat resistant. The lead glaze commonly used to waterproof redware vaporized at the temperatures used for stoneware, so salt glaze and Albany slip (a mixture of a fine clay and water that fired to a thick tan to a deep brown glaze) was used to seal the ceramic body and to make the vessels easier to clean (Ketchum Jr. 1970; McNerny 1981; Raycraft & Raycraft 1987).

While the better quality clays and high firing temperatures made stoneware more expensive than redware, increased awareness of the health risks associated with lead leaching into stored foods and liquids gave stoneware a competitive edge by the late 1700s (Ketchum Jr. 1970). By the time the Armstrongs occupied the Paris Pike location, stoneware had become the workhorse of the nineteenth-century kitchen, pantry, and springhouse. Eminently functional, stoneware was produced primarily in a limited variety of utilitarian vessel forms including jars, crocks, bowls or bakers, jugs, churns, and pitchers (Ketchum Jr. 1994; Walthall et al. 1991). [SLIDE – Table 1] The stoneware fragments recovered from the Phase II testing and Phase III backhoe trenching – representing 29 different vessels – indicated an even more limited variety of vessel shapes and sizes (Table 1; Appendix 1).

Table 1. Number of Represented Stoneware Vessels Per Vessel Type.

<i>Vessel Type</i>	<i>Manufacture Technique</i>	<i>Estimated Diameter</i>	<i>Number</i>
Straight wall jar	Wheel Thrown	26cm (n=1)	7
Incurved Jar	Wheel thrown	26.5cm (n=1)	3
Necked Jar	Wheel Thrown	—	2
Bowl	Wheel Thrown	23cm (n=2), 26cm (n=1)	7
Bowl	Molded	26cm (n=2), 27cm (n=1)	7
Crock	Wheel Thrown	27cm	1
Crock or jar with shelf rim	Slip Cast	—	1
Pitcher	Wheel Thrown	—	1

Bowls, both wheel thrown and mold produced, were the most common vessel type, followed by straight walled jars, all of which were wheel thrown. The incurved and necked jars, crock, and pitcher, were also wheel thrown. The estimated diameter, from 23 to 27 centimeters, and general size of the observed stonewares, ½ to 2 gallon capacity, is also rather limited in range.

Comparison measurements of modern common food storage and preparation items indicated that this range of sizes would be consistent with vessels used to prepare or store foods and liquids for a household serving more than two people. The recovered fragments were of vessel types and sizes that were frequently moved and used, particularly during food preparation and serving, and therefore also most likely to be broken. Larger stoneware vessels may have been too heavy to allow frequent movement and indeed vessels of this size are absent from our sample. An alternative to large stoneware vessels would have been the use of metal or wood food storage and preparation items, like flour barrels (Fitzmaurice 1889) or tin butter churns (Franklin 1991).

Some stoneware was produced by small potteries with local distribution (Ketchum 1970), while others were made by large centralized operations with wide trade networks that utilized transportation routes such as the Erie Canal (Raycraft & Raycraft 1987). A need for better quality clays that were more limited in distribution as well as for kilns and fuels to produce the required high firing temperatures may have led to a more industrialized process over time. It has also been suggested that smaller operations that used a combination of family and hired labor may have been common in rural areas. These wares may have been distributed through middlemen called “pot sellers” or “jug dealers” (Walthall et al. 1991). Vessels that were serviceable but imperfect, known as seconds, could also be purchased directly from the pottery for a reduced price (Raycraft and Raycraft 1987).

[SLIDE - Examples] Three fragments with incised or impressed maker’s marks and capacity stamps were among the stonewares included in this analysis. Two were on wheel thrown pieces that had a salt glazed exterior and unglazed interior. “I. THOM...” with a 1-gallon capacity stamp was on a straight walled jar, and “I. TH...” with a partial capacity stamp was on a pitcher fragment. A third wheel thrown bowl fragment with a salt glazed exterior and Albany slip interior had “THO...: and a partial capacity stamp.

Hackley (1997) reported that Isaac Thomas and his son David produced salt glazed, and occasionally, slip glazed stoneware impressed with “I. Thomas” in Waco, Kentucky, between approximately 1834 to 1876. [SLIDE – map of Kentucky] Waco is located in Madison County approximately 33 miles to the southeast of the Armstrong farmstead. During the nineteenth-

century, at least eight other potteries produced stoneware in or near Waco, Kentucky (Hackley 1997). Additional potteries were located within 50 miles of the Armstrongs, including Lexington, Danville, and Clintonville (Kentucky Pottery 1997). Clearly, the Armstrongs would have been able to purchase all the stoneware items they required either locally or through traveling salesmen selling local potters' wares.

It is worth noting that the marked pieces and some of the other salt glazed fragments appear to be of less than the best quality. It is possible that these may have been seconds, purchased at a reduced price (Raycraft & Raycraft 1987).

Refined Earthenwares

[SLIDE – examples] Forty-seven refined earthenware vessels – representing six vessel forms – were identified during the preliminary analysis of the phase II materials from the Armstrong farmstead (Appendix 2). These vessels provided glimpses into the lives of the site's nineteenth-century occupants, particularly with regard to the social status of the family.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the economic system of Kentucky shifted from subsistence farming to cash crops and industry (Kleber et al. 1992:7; McBride and McBride 1990:601). With changes in the economy came new rules of society (Mullins 1995:108). These new etiquettes “reinforced standardizing and segmenting behavior” – behavior that first appeared among wealthier and elite groups (Shackel 1993:5).

Refined earthenwares are one important tool for measuring the emergence of these new rules and ideals. [SLIDE – matched set of dishes] Paul Shackel (1993:5) suggests that

Greater diversity in plate sizes and growing functional diversity of ceramics in an assemblage [can be] interpreted as an indication of the increasing segmentation found at the dinner table, which helped reinforce a new standardized way of eating. Behavior that standardizes and segments requires one dish per person and a variety of dish sizes for different courses in the meal (e.g., butter dishes, dessert dishes, meat dishes, etc.).

Therefore, according to Shackel, if few types and sizes are present in an assemblage, this lack of variation and segmentation indicates the occupant's non-participation in these new societal rules. Conversely, the presence of few types but many sizes – such as with matched dishes – indicates a high degree of acceptance and participation. A variety of types and sizes indicates some segmentation and partial participation (Shackel 1993:32).

Mark Leone (1999) modified this model slightly by removing the element of vessel size and focusing solely on type and form. Since vessel sizes could not be determined for the majority of vessels from the Armstrong farmstead, our analysis utilized Leone's modified formulas.

[SLIDE – formulas] The variables he used were V, W, and F – where V = the total number of vessels present in minimum vessel count; W = the number of ware types further subdivided by the number of primary decorative techniques; and F = the number of different vessel forms present. The first formula ($V/F \times W$) measures the Type Variant, while the second ($V/W \times F$) measures the Function Variant. Together, these equations determine how orderly a dining table was at meal time as well as “how such a dining pattern taught people time, etiquette, and the rules of producing labor in a profit-making economy” (Leone 1999:196). The indices illustrate the degree to which households, through their actions and beliefs, were engaged in the culture of modern discipline that accompanied the growth of a capitalist economy (Leone 1999:208).

Table 2. Breakdown of vessels stratigraphically.

Location	Vessel	Number
0-10 cmbs – Late	Saucers	11
	Plates	5
	Cups	6
	Bowls	2
	Other serving vessel	1
10-20 cmbs – Early	Saucers	3
	Plates	10
	Cups	8
	Coffee pot lid	1

[SLIDE – breakdown of vessels by stratigraphic unit] The 47 vessels from the site were divided stratigraphically to create a chronology -- early (10-20 cmbs) and late (0-10 cmbs) (Table 2). As the analyses on the material from this site proceed, this chronology will be refined and the

formulas reapplied. Indices were generated separately for tablewares (such as plates and serving vessels) and teawares (such as cups and saucers).

[SLIDE – summary of archival data] Our impressions from the archival data, particularly county tax assessments and census records, were that John and Mary Armstrong were fairly affluent or at least solidly middle class (Table 3) (Fayette County Tax Assessment Book 1849, 1862, 1865; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1860a, 1860b, 1870a, 1870b). Mr. Armstrong was a physician. In addition, they owned a rather extensive tract of land (44 acres) as well as a variety of farm implements and livestock. Furthermore, since the farm was situated on a major transportation route of the time, the family potentially had access to whatever goods were commercially available. Therefore, it was expected that the ceramic assemblage would possess a variety of vessels with specialized functions, but few ware types. That is, that the Armstrong family would have subscribed to and participated in the elite ideology of modern discipline and demonstrated this through the use of dishes with specialized functions.

Table 3. Assessed values for the Armstrong property during John's lifetime.

	Land	Personal	Slaves	Farm Tools	Livestock
1849	\$1,800		\$600		\$100
1860	\$3,520	\$12,900		\$125	\$840
1862	\$1,680		\$600		\$100
1865	\$2,500		\$100		\$200
1870	\$6,000			\$200	\$700

[SLIDE – Tables 4 and 5] The results, however, were surprising (Tables 4 and 5). In fact, the Armstrong family had very few specialized vessels. Vessel forms were limited to six basic forms, including plates, saucers, cups, bowls, a coffee pot lid, and a serving platter. However, there were 24 different wares types and decorative techniques.

Table 4. Type and Function Indices for the late occupation of the site (10-20 cmbs).

	Type (V/F x W)	Function (V/W x F)
Tablewares	16.0 (8/3 x 6)	4.0 (8/6 x 3)
Teawares	93.5 (17/2 x 11)	3.1 (17/11 x 2)

Table 5. Type and Function Indices for the early occupation of the site (0-10 cmbs).

	Type (V/W x F)	Function (V/F x W)
Tablewares	55.0 (11/2 x 10)	2.2 (11/10 x 2)
Teawares	33.0 (11/2 x 6)	3.7 (11/6 x 2)

Part of the reason these results were surprising is this: along with segmented and standardized dining, personal hygiene became part of the new societal rules and etiquette that were emerging during the nineteenth century (Shackel 1993:47). [SLIDE – toothbrush] There were at least two toothbrushes recovered from the site during the phase III investigation – including the one shown here. The presence of these objects seemed to suggest that the Armstrong family might have been engaging in the elite behavior of dental hygiene.

The class position of the site’s occupants was also measured using Miller’s (2000) ceramic indexing. The index of the earliest deposits (10-20 cmbs) was an average of 1.97, while the average for the later materials (0-10 cmbs) was 1.86. [SLIDE – Table 6] Undecorated or minimally decorated wares dominated the assemblage (63.8%) and approximately one-fourth of the vessels were transfer-printed (23.4%) (Table 6).

Table 6. Summary of primary decorative motifs.

	Early Deposits (10-20 cmbs)	Late Deposits (0-10 cmbs)
Undecorated	9	9
Minimally decorated	6	6
Shell-edged	1	0
Hand-painted	0	3
Transfer-printed	5	6
Unidentified	1	1

Discussion/Conclusion

So what does this all mean? The Armstrongs were clearly connected to larger commercial markets via the Lexington-Maysville Pike and could have potentially purchased any ceramics they desired. Then why did this seemingly affluent family possess so many mismatched refined earthenwares and stoneware bowls?

The answer may lie in the question itself – that the site is located on a major transportation corridor. O’Malley reported that the site appeared to have “served as a watering place for stage

horses and probably also served as a way-station for passengers. The site owners may have taken advantage of their location near a toll house to capitalize on the stagecoach trade” (O’Malley 1987:91).

So, we compared the results of our analyses with those of another site type that accommodated the needs of travelers during the nineteenth century, specifically the Old Landmark tavern in southern Illinois. [SLIDE – Table 7] Our mean ceramic values were more consistent with the tavern sites than other domestic sites (Wagner and McCorvie 1992:380) (Table 7).

Table 7. Comparison of Mean Ceramic Values.

Armstrong Farmstead		Tavern		Rural Domestic	
Early Occupation	1.97	Young Tavern	2.10	Mappin	1.74
Late Occupation	1.86	Old Landmark		Drake	1.56
		Vermillion	1.93	Moses Tabbs #2	1.44
		Shanafelt	1.91	Moses Tabbs #1	1.42
		Walker Tavern	2.37	Jonathon Hale	1.67

In addition, Wagner and McCorvie (1992:367) observed that the majority of the refined ceramic vessels from the Old Landmark site were plates, cups, and saucers – dishes associated with food consumption (Table 8). [SLIDE – Table 8] A similar pattern of vessel function was observed at the Armstrong farmstead. Furthermore, the stonewares in the assemblage were exclusively vessels used in food preparation and storage.

Table 8. Comparison of Vessel Forms.

Location	# Total Vessels	# Plates, Cups, Saucers	% Plates, Cups, Saucers
Armstrong Farmstead	47	43	91.5%
Old Landmark Tavern	229	172	75.1%

[SLIDE – Few more ceramics] Therefore, the distribution of stonewares and refined earthenwares – particularly the significant number of vessels for food preparation and consumption – supports the hypothesis that meal service was an important activity at the site and that the Armstrong family may have been accommodating travelers in their home. The mismatched refined earthenwares and stoneware seconds purchased by the family seem to indicate that meal times were not used for the types of status displays described by Shackel

(1993) and Leone (1999). The Armstrong family may have been engaging in status displays. However, these displays – at least with the preliminary evidence available at present – do not appear to have taken place at the dinner table. Rather, the majority of meals were served to accommodate travelers, not to entertain members of the family's social network.

Avenues for Future Research

As the analyses proceed with the phase III materials, we will continue to seek evidence for the role the Armstrong farmstead may have played along the important transportation route of Paris Pike. In addition, we will investigate the ways the family may have defined and reinforced their social status through their material goods and social rituals.

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Appendix 1: Stonewares Recovered From 15FA185 During Phase II Testing and Phase III Backhoe Trenching

Provenience	Rim	Exterior	Interior	Technique	Vessel	Marked	Capacity	Diameter
843/91	Rounded bolster	salt	unglazed	wheel	Straight wall jar	"I.THOM..."	Yes 1 gal.	-
834/90 see BH12	Collared	two	albany	mold	bowl	no	no	26cm
926/93	Rounded bolster	salt	albany	wheel	Bowl?	"THO..."	partial	-
448/20	Tapered bolster	Albany	albany	wheel	Straight wall jar	no	no	-
521/30	Rounded bolster	salt	albany	wheel	Necked jar	no	no	-
820/89	Collared	salt	albany	Mold?	bowl	no	no	-
910/87	Collared	two	albany	Mold?	bowl	no	no	-
Bh1	everted	salt	unglazed	wheel	pitcher	"I. TH..."	yes	-
BH2	collared	salt	unglazed	wheel	bowl	no	no	23cm
BH3	Rounded bolster	salt	unglazed	wheel	Straight wall jar	no	no	-
BH4 see 820/89	collared	salt	albany	Wheel	Bowl	no	No	-
BH5	collared	salt	albany	Wheel?	bowl	no	No	-
BH6	collared	two	albany	Mold?	bowl	no	no	27cm
BH7	collared	two	albany	wheel	bowl	no	no	26cm
BH8	Beaded bolster	Salt	albany	Wheel	crock	no	no	27cm
BH9	collared	two	albany	wheel	bowl	no	no	23cm
BH10 see BH16	Rounded bolster	salt	albany	wheel	Incurved jar	no	no	26.5cm
No BH11								
BH12 see 834/90	Sheltd rim	Bristol/cobalt band on rim	bristol	Slip cast	Jar/crock?	no	no	-
BH13	collared	two	albany	mold	bowl	no	no	26cm
BH14	Square bolster	salt	albany	wheel	Straight wall jar	no	no	26cm
BH15	collared	salt	unglazed	wheel	Straight wall jar	no	no	-
BH16 see BH10	Rounded bolster	salt	salt	wheel	Incurved jar	no	no	-
BH17	Everted rim	salt	salt	wheel	Incurved jar	no	no	-
BH18	Rounded bolster	salt	salt	wheel	Straight wall jar	no	no	-
BH19	Everted rim	salt	salt	wheel	Everted jar	no	no	-
BH20	Rounded bolster	salt	salt	wheel	Straight wall jar	no	no	-
BH21	collared	albany	albany	Mold industrial	bowl	no	no	-
BH22	collared	albany	albany	Mold Indus.	bowl	no	no	-
Bh23	collared	albany	albany	Mold inds.	bowl	no	no	-

Appendix 2: Refined earthenwares recovered during the Phase II testing of site 15Fa185.

Unit	Level	Type	Attribute 1	Attribute 2	Attribute 3	N	Vessel code
16	1	Ironstone	Plain			1	Saucer
7	1	Whiteware	Flow decorated	Blue	Molded design	1	Saucer
7	1	Whiteware	Plain		Molded design	1	Plate
8	1	Whiteware	Plain			1	Saucer
16	1	Whiteware	Plain			1	Saucer
16	2	Ironstone	Decal		Molded design	1	Saucer
6	2	Ironstone	Plain			1	Saucer
9	2	Ironstone	Plain			1	Other serving
15	2	Ironstone	Plain			1	Saucer
15	2	Ironstone	Transfer print	Brown		1	Saucer
16	2	Ironstone	Transfer print	Brown		1	Saucer
6	2	Pearlware	Plain			1	Bowl
13	2	Porcelain	Decal			1	Plate
5	2	Porcelain	Hand painted: monochrome	Blue		1	Cup
10	2	Porcelain	Hand painted: polychrome			1	Cup
7	2	Porcelain	Plain		Molded design	1	Cup
16	2	Porcelain	Plain			1	Saucer
16	2	Porcelain	Plain		Molded body	1	Cup
13	2	Porcelain	Transfer print	Blue		1	Cup
7	2	Unidentified	Unidentified Decoration			1	Bowl
5	2	Whiteware	Hand painted: monochrome	Blue		1	Cup
10	2	Whiteware	Plain		Molded design	1	Plate
16	2	Whiteware	Plain			1	Saucer
9	2	Whiteware	Transfer print	Blue		1	Plate
10	2	Whiteware	Transfer print	Blue		1	Plate
14	3	Creamware	Plain			3	Cup
16	3	Ironstone	Plain			1	Plate
16	3	Ironstone	Plain		Molded body	1	Coffee Pot
15	3	Pearlware	Transfer print	Blue		1	Plate
6	3	Porcelain	Plain		Molded design	1	Saucer
8	3	Porcelain	Plain			1	Cup
8	3	Porcelain	Plain		Molded body	1	Cup
8	3	Porcelain	Plain		Molded with gilt accents	1	Cup
16	3	Porcelain	Plain			1	Plate
16	3	Porcelain	Plain		Gilt accents, no molding	1	Plate
16	3	Porcelain	Plain		Molded body	1	Saucer
16	3	Porcelain	Plain			1	Saucer
14	3	Whiteware	Indeterminate	Blue		1	Plate
16	3	Whiteware	Plain			2	Plate
9	3	Whiteware	Transfer print	Red		1	Plate
9	3	Whiteware	Transfer print	Purple		1	Cup
16	3	Whiteware	Transfer print	Brown		1	Cup
9	4	Whiteware	Edge decorated	Blue		1	Plate
9	4	Whiteware	Transfer print	Blue		1	Plate