Cultural Legitimacy in Surry County, Virginia: The Edwards Family of Chestnut Farms

Donald Lee Sadler

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CULTURAL LEGITIMACY IN SURRY COUNTY, VIRGINIA

The Edwards Family of Chestnut Farms

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Anthropology

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

by

Donald Lee Sadler

2006
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Donald Sadler

Approved by the Committee, December 2006

Mary Voigt, Chair

Martin Gallivan

Matthew Liebmann
“There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those that follow.”

Ecclesiastes 1:11

Mr. Edwards I shall always remember.
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The quiet is all around me. The strong-handed quiet of God that picks me up and puts me down again; and I know that I am whole. I stand alone on the cliff edge, gazing out onto the river that seemingly has changed little since the first days of settlement along its sides. However, this view must have been the same, similar then as now, beautiful and calm as waves lap the sandy shores of home. They may have stood on this same spot, barefoot in this same grass, feeling this familiar breeze and peering upward into Surry skies. They are a name on the wind now, a page in a book, a whisper in time and place. The men of Chestnut Farm’s past are gone and forgotten; they are tombstones cracked and broken within groves that have been plowed around so long; the reason is unremembered. But there are wonderful stories to be told; they are hard to hear and need to be culled from browned courthouse pages, family lore and history books, or literally dug and pulled from the very earth their ancestors trod near the shores of the river. In my research, I hope to tell some of these stories, let these men live again, if only in the form of this paper, if only to the few who will read it. In some small way, I feel I owe it to them, having shared the same view and heard those whispers in the airs of the river all my life. This paper is my chance to introduce two of these men, William Edwards V, and his nephew, William Edwards VI. These men lived the opulent lifestyles of the gentry elite and their extraordinary level of comfort, significant occupations, and collection of fineries provide the basis for study into the minds of the 18th-century rural gentlemen.

This study would not have been possible without the guidance of my advisor Ms. Mary Voigt, the assistance of professors Martin Gallivan, Matthew Liebmann, Marley Brown, Barbara Carson, and the undeniable influence of my family at Chestnut Farms led by Margaret Berryman, who set the course for my love of the past and of archaeological pursuits to better learn the history of the land we each know and love.
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ABSTRACT

As the eighteenth-century elite of the Colonial Chesapeake strove to attain recognition from the landed gentry of England, they propagated a distinct set of rules for behavior, etiquette, and the symbolism of certain material items. During their quest for legitimacy from their English counterparts a distinctly American elite culture began to emerge. These upper-crust urban dwellers then became the arbiters of a style and gentlemanliness that the rural elite sought to emulate. The country gentlemen could use these same rules of behavior to distance themselves from their rustic neighbors. In this struggle for social positioning the role of artifacts and behavior played an integral part in creating identity in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake region. This paper focuses on the Edwards family of Chestnut Farms plantation in Surry County, Virginia. Combining both archaeological and historical data with the fields of culture and consumption studies this study shows how the symbolic qualities of material goods actively shaped and structured the social order of the Edwards environment.
Cultural Legitimacy in Surry County, Virginia
During the eighteenth century, material goods were instruments that helped to create meaning, order the world, and maintain social relationships through nonverbal communication. The affluent in the colonies were attempting to emulate the landed gentry in England and legitimize their culture and social standings. The English gentry would never recognize even the wealthiest colonists as equals, but in trying to attain this equality the elite crafted for themselves a unique strictly American behavior. Having become the arbiters of this new material and behavioral culture, the American elite began to act out their newfound social standings in the rituals of the dinner table, manners and dress, and in other social engagements. This culture began to grow within the more urban environments as town dwellers had easier access to new material goods. However, their rural counterparts strived to attain the same cultural legitimacy the elite sought from England, and in so doing began to emulate the new behaviors, rituals, and material cultures. The rural elite could then use these new rituals and material goods to distance themselves from their neighbors and continue the hierarchy set in England.

Goods give meaning to social conduct as they enforce, emphasize, and create behavior. Goods may be keenly manipulated in social circumstances. How items are used or refused dictates how they maintain, create, or challenge social relations. Hegemonic control is possible if goods function as a media that disguises social relations. Competitions to acquire these material goods create boundaries that exclude others. Hegemony exists when these others recognize, and therefore legitimatize, the social standings of the ones performing these new rituals and behaviors, or possessing these unattainable material goods.
Carr and Walsh’s (1988, 1994) studies of probates and wealth differentials showed that material culture was a reflection of economic prosperity. Their studies showed differences in material culture collections from probate inventories of the urban and rural communities near Williamsburg and Annapolis. Amenities believed to help make life more comfortable or luxurious were shown to exist predominantly in the wealthier probate estates. Paul Shackel (1993) continued this work and looked specifically for items of personal discipline and luxury to increase or decrease during times of social or economic crisis. Shackel finds that elites used material goods during these crisis periods to define power relations, create social hierarchies, and preserve the social order. Shackel argues that the elites used new material goods and etiquette to maintain social distance and stratification. As the industrial revolution allowed material items to become cheaper and more obtainable, the non-elite began to adopt regular usage of ritual items such as tea sets, while the wealthy sought to maintain their status with newer and distinctive material goods. Crowley (2001) is another source that uses items of comfort and ease to show how the higher classes attempted to better their lives and create a social distance for themselves from the non-elite.

Archaeological investigations carried out at Chestnut Farms revealed a mid to late eighteenth-century occupation dating to the period of the Edwards family. Using Carr and Walsh, Shackel, and Crowley as guidelines for the types of material items that would hint at status, the research question emerged as to whether or not the Edwards families were pivotal players in the late eighteenth-century power struggles for culture legitimacy. Were the rural elites of Surry County striving to emulate the elites from more urban environments such as Williamsburg or Yorktown, who in turn were attempting to become
recognized as legitimate from the landed gentry in England? In involving themselves in these power struggles, did the Edwards family attain the same types of material goods, rituals, or behaviors that would allow them to exert a sort of hegemonic control over those in Surry County who were unable to acquire such items? In attempting to answer these questions this research will combine probate data, historical records, and archaeology in a rare combination of insight into one colonial family in rural Surry County. By placing the Edwards of Chestnut Farms into their material world of power struggles, luxury possessions, and ritual behaviors, insight may be gained into a wider world of cultural struggles using material goods to enforce social behavior.

During this study, the Edwards family will be placed within the cultural and historic milieu of Surry County and beyond into the Chesapeake during the last half of the eighteenth century. Comparisons of the material culture of the Edwards will be made to the research of Carr and Walsh, Shackel, Crowley, and others. Luxury items found through archaeology and probates of the family will be analyzed to show how these material goods could be used to influence social behavior. Finally, the study will address how these newfound luxury items were available to the Edwards family in remote Surry County, how they were affordable to them, and most importantly why they were desirable to them in the usage of power struggles and attaining cultural legitimacy.
Chapter 1: Understanding the Gentry

Colonial planters in late eighteenth-century Virginia strove to emulate the gentry class of England and be recognized as legitimate gentleman by both their English relations and their American neighbors (Rozbicki 1998, Breen 1985). This cultural legitimacy was sought through the accumulation of symbolic material culture and through culturally encoded concepts of manners and style in order to structure social relations (Shackel 1993, Bushman 1992, Crowley 2001, Sweeney 1994, Watson 1980). However, gestures of appreciation and status could only be bestowed upon a recipient when he or she was considered deserving of such recognition. When the genteel model was transported out of England, it left behind a system of reference points that sustained it and gave it meaning. One significant cultural aspiration remained the same, however, serving the same purpose in America as in England: the control over the symbolic power of gentility. For the young planter elite in America to the established gentry in England, control over this symbolic power was capable of providing legitimacy, and ensuring an effective acceptance by its members and an authentication of their hard-earned self-identity as the most powerful members of their society.

Being legitimate means to be in accordance with established rules, principles and standards. Legitimacy requires sanction by some authority to confer or confirm social status (Rozbicki 1998:25). For genteel style, taste, literary and architectural forms, manners, dress, or virtues to be recognized as authentic and reputable, they had to carry the mark of approval by an authority qualified to pronounce such standards legitimate.
Therefore, there must first exist an authority to do so, and for the colonial gentry that authority resided across the Atlantic in England. But despite being steadily rejected as gentry by the metropolitans from England (Rozbicki 1998:25), the southern planter gentry managed to distance themselves from the rest of the colonists through their control of power and wealth. The planter elite that dominated the later eighteenth century delegated their own cultural legitimacy within the colonial market (Rozbicki 1998:25). Functioning locally as practical arbiters of genteel lifestyle and values, they became capable of exclusion and inclusion in constructing social order. Michal Rozbicki (1998) postulates that this search for cultural legitimacy led to the formation of a culture that was strictly American, and that once the colonials became their own arbiters of cultural legitimacy they began to judge and separate themselves from those beneath them on their self-imposed social scale. So, just as tension developed over recognition amongst the English and colonial gentry, so too did it develop between Virginia’s urban and rural elites.

The Edwards family in rural Surry County Virginia fought the problem of recognition on both fronts during the later decades of the eighteenth century. Set apart from their contemporaries in the towns of Williamsburg and Yorktown, the gentry of Surry possessed the same desire to employ the symbolic power of gentility in order to affect their social status, as did those living in the towns, who were themselves fighting for legitimacy with the English gentry. From London came the fashions, tastes, and styles of genteel life. From all over England came the bulk of the manufactured goods that created the furor of the new consumerism. But the most important question concerns changing desires—what made people who were happy with the old and serviceable want
the new and fashionable (Martin 1993:92)? Affordability, availability, and desirability were called the “constraints of consumerism,” and desirability started the rise of metropolitan culture and standards of gentility (Martin 1993:9). In this thesis I seek to show that in the late eighteenth century, Surry County had a hopeful gentry striving for cultural legitimacy who faced the issues of affordability and availability of goods, along with the desire to use those goods to attain a more prominent social standing (Martin 1993:9). To achieve this research goal I employ archaeological data collected through survey and excavation on the Edwards family land of Chestnut Farms. A second source of information comes from documents. Extant probates and wills from Edwards family members documents the material culture not present in the archaeological record. Comparing probate inventory and estate values of the Edwards family to estates in Surry County from the late eighteenth century will show the wealth and high status enjoyed by the Edwards’ in their time. Edwards family probates are compared to those of prominent individuals in both Williamsburg and Yorktown to show similarities between the urban elite and the elite of Surry County.

Defining the Gentry

Chesapeake society became more differentiated during the eighteenth century. The disparity of lifestyles that had begun in the latter decades of the seventeenth century in the Chesapeake increased substantially in the older settled areas (Greene 1988:92). In these areas the top ten percent of landowners possessed nearly half to two-thirds of the land. This land grab forced those less advantaged to seek meager estates elsewhere. Slavery caused this discrepancy in land ownership and class separation to further increase as the institution expanded dramatically during the eighteenth century (Kulikoff 1986).
Only those with money derived from trade, public office, the law, or inheritances could afford the large number of slaves that contributed so much to the fortunes of the great Chesapeake families after 1710 (Greene 1988:92). From this beginning families such as the Carters, Randolphs, Ludwells, Burwells, and Lees rose to dominance in the Chesapeake through the middle decades of the eighteenth century.

This emergent elite comprised only a small fraction of the landholding number, yet their control over wealth in the Chesapeake permitted substantial manipulation over everyday life in the region. During the first four decades of the eighteenth century these select few enforced their oligarchic control using various methods. One such means was the transformation of the spatial and social landscape by the establishment of the slave-powered, self-sufficient plantation communities that became the foundation of Chesapeake society (Kulikoff 1986:134-41).

During the middle to latter decades of the eighteenth century the second and third generations of these established great families began to intermarry. These unions aided in uniting their economic, social, and political positions across local political borders. Meanwhile, they also succeeded in founding a far-ranging and intricate network of interrelated, highly visible, high-status elite families. Ownership of land and slaves during the prosperous tobacco booms of the 1760s and 1770s allowed these families to further increase their hold on a disproportionate share of available credit. Their plantations and their standards of living increased along with their wealth, their control over their regions, and their overall attitude of superiority (Kulikoff 1986:141).

The culmination of the Chesapeake elite lifestyle was the genteel person, who was regimented, determined, polite, educated, dynamic, and graceful. This long list of desired
traits, when incorporated into a single character, created a magnetism and authority that was the ideal of the age (Bushman 1992:19). All of this extravagance, indulgence, and hegemonic attitude could be summed up in one word: “gentility” (Carr and Walsh 1994:60). The gentry were a distinctive social class whose self-definition developed during the eighteenth century through their articulation of style. These gentlemen set themselves up as exemplars of public spiritedness and authority and eagerly grasped the social and political obligations appropriate to their status; they assumed almost total control over civil and religious institutions at both the local and provincial levels, providing those foundations with more energy and influence than they ever enjoyed beforehand. As a result of the hegemonic control enjoyed by this growing gentry elite, the eighteenth-century Chesapeake was becoming far more like metropolitan Britain (Greene 1988:94).

Wealthy colonists employed a tactic often used by transitional social groups: mimicking their superiors to differentiate themselves from subordinates. To separate themselves from their neighbors and to impress royal officials with their English ways and stature, the wealthy began to promote a style of life that was qualitatively unique and distinctive (Sweeney 1994:5). Appropriating the lifestyles of the English rural gentry, they constructed imposing new brick houses commanding the countryside, rivers, and inlets of the Chesapeake. Status usually followed a spatial gradient, with the wealthiest along the river controlling access to shipping (Kealhofer 1999:66). They engaged more of their slaves in household service, and filled their homes with sumptuous possessions that would help to substantiate their own self-conceptions and to indicate them to others as people of status and wealth (Greene 1988:93). Being rich meant using candles after
dark, sleeping in better beds with linens, bedsteads, and hangings, owning more pewter dishes and drinking vessels than poorer people, using a greater variety of cooking equipment, and sometimes owning a looking glass or picture (Carr and Walsh 1994:63). Their use of these artifacts and landscapes facilitated the notion that they were the rightful holders of power in their regions (Martin 1993:146). By the 1760s the social position of anyone could be weighed not just by the wealth or offices held but also by their dress, household arrangements, and social ceremonies (Carr and Walsh 1994:61). The polished surfaces of walnut and mahogany tea tables and other specialized tables, sets of chairs, oriental and English ceramics, imported wineglasses, and elaborate furnishings did more than mark financial status: these goods also served to express character.

With the addition of this elaborate material culture came new attitudes in language and movement; with new material goods came a new genteel owner of those goods. Social status was not just based on wealth, but bolstered by manners and education (Sweeney 1994:6). The acquisitions of these new material goods dictated circumstances in which these goods were put to social use. Occasions to eat, drink, and gather socially were now opportunities to display these new wealth items. New wine glasses encouraged social drinking; new chair sets encouraged social calls and conversation among equals; elaborate tea sets turned tea drinking into a ritual setting offering new opportunities for consumption and display. Material goods therefore played an extremely important role in genteel social gatherings (Sweeney 1994:8-9).

When items such as tea sets and Windsor chairs began to be commonplace, the upper class embraced new styles during the 1760s and 1770s. It is during this time that
gentlemen began to obtain new items that set them apart from other Virginians. This was the advent of the first consumer revolution, and the conspicuous consumption greatly contributed to the great debt experienced by most of the gentry (Holton 1999:81). Carriages, wallpaper, fine mahogany furniture and gold watches became some of the badges of distinction that set apart the very rich from the merely wealthy (Sweeney 1994:37). Carriages especially were an essential requirement of the very wealthy to showcase their status in society. These riding vehicles could transport the entire family to churches or neighboring plantations, helping to circulate the ties and maintain new relationships through visitation and marriage.

The gentleman’s house still embodied the most luxurious and dramatic element in a fashionable genteel style of life. Porticos, elegant doorways, grand stair halls, chambers for waiting, formal talking, and dining, all carefully orchestrated an arena in which to exercise the gentry’s definition of status. Each great house was a whirlpool of local power sustained through a centrality to business, education, hospitality, and politics. The landscape around the manor house was equally arranged as an extension of the ideological process. The manufactured collection of buildings and spaces ordered by social barriers such as rows of trees, terraces, and outbuildings, presented to the visitor a system of barriers to overcome to finally meet with the great man of the residence. Kealhofer (1999) states that Chesapeake gardens were also used by these men to define and legitimate their place in the world, giving the elite another means to control place, space, and social relationships (Kealhofer 1999:76). Houses and landscapes became an extension of the manipulation of the material world to separate the classes (Upton 1988:357). Experienced as planned, this landscape was a potent ideological statement.
Guests to a great house in the eighteenth century would not only be toured around a magnificent residence and landscape, but would be just as enthralled by the host’s tales of his celebrated relations, the history of the manor, planned improvements to the estate, and by the sight of small groups of estate workers sprinkled around the landscape working on various projects at a appropriate distance from the house. The house became a “power base” of culture, authority, and prestige. This arrival of an aristocratic sensibility on these great estates was central to the moral and social foundation of rural capitalism (Johnson 1996:154).

Why did purchasers want these goods in the first place? What made their acquisition so desirable? Aside from any intrinsic or aesthetic value these items may have possessed, their assistance in manipulation within the possessor’s social arena was priceless. Material culture such as artifacts, houses, and landscapes, can be used to affect the behavior of the society in which such items were produced. However, material culture cannot accomplish this without frameworks of meaning within the culture itself. A system of beliefs, concepts, and dispositions, help to give material culture it’s meaning. These meanings are then played out as part of social strategies (Hodder 1986:8). The gentry of the colonial Chesapeake took their material world and utilized its symbolism to create new roles, new meanings and new status stations for themselves and their environment.

Their choices were not made just for comfort or beauty. Families at the top of the social ladder endeavored to institute their superiority by adopting the refinements and sophistications of English gentry, although the lifestyles of the upper nobility were unattainable (Carr and Walsh 1994:132). Families at diverse ranks used artifacts to both
create social distance from those beneath them and to bridge the gap separating them from those above.

This affluent standard of living and overall gentry attitude that emerged in the latter half of the eighteenth century in the Chesapeake can be examined to see if differences in lifestyles existed within locales of consumerism. If one lived in urban town settings where life was seemingly faster paced and more competitive, was this desire to maintain control over one’s environment more easily validated? Town living afforded gentlemen the ability to constantly maintain social encounters and visibility. Town living revolved more around “the clock time” and presented many more opportunities for social interaction than country living did (Carr and Walsh 1994:91). Urban life and culture focused on display and on the concentration of leisure and the creation of facilities for people to meet each other (Weatherill 1988:81). Town living encouraged a level of conspicuous consumption never matched in the country. Distinguished officeholders and bureaucrats stocked newly built, elegant town houses with the latest in trendy imports, showing an abandon that some thought verged on excess. The local artisans and laborers who served their rich neighbors procured amenities and trivial luxuries on a scale far beyond that of country inhabitants with comparable levels of holdings. Keeping up with one’s peers meant spending an increasing proportion of moveable wealth on consumer goods (Carr and Walsh 1994:102). Towns were important as centers of distribution and this influenced the patterns of ownership of some goods with strongly concentrated sources of supply (Weatherill 1988:87).
Life in the Chesapeake countryside did not offer this desired visibility, and one might assume that there was a separation of gentility between urban and rural elites. Research (Carr and Walsh 1994, Weatherill 1988) shows differences between town and country living, but these differences were not sufficient to suggest that urban areas were surrounded by a countryside devoid of material goods. Instead, the evidence suggests that diffusion was occurring from town to country, especially for some of the newer goods. Did these urban developments eventually promote an increase of amenities in the countryside? Even people living in the most remote countryside could occasionally come to town to acquire goods.

The results of the Carr and Walsh and Weatherill studies showed some differences in rural and urban estates. Town dwellers in Williamsburg, Annapolis, and Yorktown scored higher on the amenities index than their country counterparts. Even town dwellers with estates valued less than £50 possessed timepieces, table knives, forks, good china, linen, and tea ware more so than country dwellers with equal estates. Goods associated with the concern for the ambience of the domestic environment such as pictures, looking glasses, and window curtains, were always more common in town inventories.

Weatherill found similar results in her studies of urban and rural inventories in England but showed books and clocks to be just as common in the rural areas, and clocks to be more numerous in rural areas than in the Carr and Walsh study of the Chesapeake (Weatherill 1988:79-84). In the rural areas studied by Weatherill, only the very wealthy showed a growing taste for coaches, expensive timepieces, decorative objects, and sets of fine china, changing their spending priorities to obtain these items.
Chapter 2: Cultural and Historical Contexts

Descriptions of life within the colonies in the latter half of the eighteenth century as well as in the Chesapeake area, and specifically in Surry County, will help to place the Edwards family within their material world.

The Colonies and the Chesapeake in the time of the Edwards, 1750-1800

By 1750 the American colonies had expanded and matured rapidly from their early start. Transatlantic exchange linked the colonies closely with Europe, Africa, and other parts of the New World. Visible marks of the fading frontier appeared in the form of churches, schools, and towns. A balanced sex ratio and stable family life existed throughout the colonies and helped maintain the ability for households and communities to grow and prosper that was lacking in early settlement. Political leaders and institutions arose from Maine to Georgia.

With white colonists divided into several religious groups (Anglicans, Baptists, Presbyterians, etc.), a fifth of the population of African descent bound in chattel slavery, and the Native American component still uneasily situated on the frontier, the makeup of society was a mixture of ethnic and religious groups. This situation reflected a society that had emerged from a frontier stage, but the consolidation of wealth by a landed and mercantile elite was matched by areas of poverty in the cities and also some rural areas (Nash et al., 1994:137).

By the third quarter of the eighteenth century, political tension and conflict had changed the lives of nearly everyone in the colonies. The French and Indian War
removed French and Spanish challengers and started nationalistic fires within the hearts of the colonists. Yet, the war still left them in economic hard times, with heavy debts and growing social divisions. Westward expansion was seen as an avenue for gentlemen to expand upon their land holdings and speculate on western land purchases across the Mississippi. Native Americans resistance of this expansion culminated in Pontiac’s rebellion in 1763. Britain responded with the Proclamation of 1763, which forbade any further expansion into the west. The British needed tax paying colonists and not the expense of war with the Native Americans. The Proclamation of 1763 infuriated Virginia land speculators, including George Washington (Holton 1999:8).

In the pre-Revolutionary decade cynicism sank ever deeper into the colonial consciousness. The colonists began to doubt their roles in the economic life of the mother country and the sensitivity of Parliament to their needs. British policies began to be perceived as an attack on the basic liberties and natural rights of British subjects in America.

The aforementioned fluidity and diversity of colonial society and the differing experiences of the colonists during the French and Indian War caused assorted responses to the disruption that came as a result of England’s reorganization of her empire. In the course of opposing English policy, previously inactive groups entered public life to challenge gentry control of political affairs (Holton 1999). The growing economic and political power the gentry enjoyed was challenged in their own communities, as these groups occupied the most radical ground in their opposition to England.

When in July of 1776 Congress officially declared its struggle for national liberation, it steered the colonists into dangerous and unknown areas (Nash et al.,
By 1783, after victory in the war with England, a new nation had come into being that was no longer dependant on the principles of monarchy and privilege but rather built upon the doctrines of republican liberty. The last two decades of the eighteenth century saw the foreign affairs of the French Revolution, European War, Jay’s Treaty, and the prospect of war with France galvanize political energies and set Alexander Hamilton’s Federalists against the Jeffersonians (Nash et al., 1994:265).

One can wonder if the Edwards, or their contemporaries in the colonial era Chesapeake, realized they were living in times that would be read about and studied for centuries. The latter half of the eighteenth century saw global changes and pivotal revolutions in the makeup of democracy and humankind. Effects of conflicts such as the French and Indian War and the American Revolution were felt throughout daily life in the Chesapeake. Prominent leaders of Virginia and her Chesapeake neighbors were stirred to revolt as a result of British taxation. Gentlemen of the day no doubt debated issues surrounding the Stamp Act, the Townsend Duties, and the Intolerable Acts, while sitting down to tea or other social events.

In both Virginia and Maryland, leadership in the eighteenth century came from the planters and their associates—merchants and lawyers—though roles often overlapped. The plantocracy dominated both houses of the legislatures, the local governments, the colonial militias, and the church vestries. A few families, most notably in Virginia, set the tone for a society that emulated the English landed gentry’s style and influence. But unlike its English counterparts, the Chesapeake aristocracy depended on a single-crop economy based on vast landholdings and black bondsmen. These laborers, settled on small plantations or quarters, swelled the population of the Chesapeake
colonies from a few hundred in 1618 to perhaps thirty-five thousand by 1675 and to well over half a million by 1776 (Greene 1988:82-83). From 1617 to 1793 tobacco was the most valuable staple export from the English American mainland colonies and the United States. Even toward the end of the eighteenth century, when falling tobacco prices and exhausted soil encouraged a more diversified economy, tobacco and slaves remained central to the colonial Chesapeake, and the plantocracy retained its remarkable homogeneity and hegemony.

The quantity of tobacco shipped to Great Britain rose from twenty thousand pounds in 1617 to over 40 million pounds in 1727, and even as the agricultural economy became diversified after 1700, colonists continued to produce ever-larger crops of tobacco. Tobacco inspection systems enacted by Virginia in 1730 and by Maryland in 1747 improved the quality of Chesapeake tobacco exported to Britain and from there to the Continent. The huge crops (averaging 100 million pounds in the early 1770s) and low price of Chesapeake tobacco overwhelmed its European competitors. By 1775, not only England but also much of Europe depended on the Chesapeake for tobacco (Greene 1988:86). The power of the plantocracy took on new meaning in the 1760s and 1770s when the struggle with the mother country highlighted a remarkable cadre of articulate and energetic leaders whose national prominence lasted far beyond the revolutionary era. The American and French revolutions and the Napoleonic Wars temporarily curtailed the European demand for Chesapeake tobacco.

The gentlemen of the pre-Revolutionary Chesapeake whose profits and estates survived the war with England, emerged still at an elite level of society though now situated above a more homogenous and culturally aware group of underlings whose
democratic mindset bode ill for the lavish lifestyles of the planter elite. The scions of these Chesapeake gentry maintained the family estates and turned to new crops and more diverse earnings that eventually fueled the similarly hierarchal plantation lifestyles of the Old South. Changes in the Chesapeake area enabled the gentry class to come into view, distancing themselves from the lower classes with new material items and specifically distinct dining performances. Large Georgian mansions and formal gardens also became expressions of the elites power. Not only did the affluent distinguish themselves from others by the quantity of goods they owned, but they also distinguished themselves by the types of material they possessed (Shackel 1993:56).

**Surry County in the time of the Edwards, 1750-1800**

From the early seventeenth century until after the disastrous Civil War, Surry County was dominated by a plantation economy. This plantation system dampened the growth of towns and manufacturing, suppressing any progress in the form of either. The population of Surry County during the later half of the eighteenth century was roughly 6,300 people. The census of 1790 shows the diversity of the county at that time: 2,762 white and 3,465 black people resided in the county, including 368 free blacks (Kornwolf 1976:1).

Education and religion were important factors of colonial Surry life. No schoolhouses existed as instruction was left to the individual families. The scions of wealthy families were sent out of the county or even the country to school. Masters who advertised like any other businessman schooled some children at home (Kornwolf 1976:2). Ten colonial churches existed within the county. Lower Surry Church in
Lawnes Creek Parish was built sometime around 1750 and borders the land near Chestnut Farms. It is quite possible that the Edwards family worshipped here, at least until the Revolution when Episcopal churches fell out of favor, a situation that continued until the hatred of England abated. Lawnes Creek Parish was used by other denominations (Baptists, Methodists) during this time (Bohannan 1927:59).

At the height of the American Revolution, Cabin Point was the “industrial” area of Surry County, and it could not boast more than a dozen buildings, all of which were considerably dispersed.

Warehouses and wharfs were used for the shipping out of crops, mostly tobacco, and for the importation of various manufactured goods (Kornwolf 1976:1). More than a dozen mills were spread across Surry County, their locations determined by functional convenience. Surry’s forests allowed milling to remain prominent within the county until the twentieth century. Cabin Point was the county’s clear mercantile center, despite its westward location (Fig.1). Cabin Point was not only Surry’s largest and most prosperous Colonial town but also one of Southside Virginia’s most vital commercial centers. Eighteenth century maps have Cabin Point shown as significantly as Newark, Hartford, or Providence. While it did not equal these cities in terms of size or population, Cabin Point could boast (according to The Virginia Gazette) of having accountants, auctions, a church, counting rooms, a Freemason’s Hall, fulling mills, granaries, grist mills, an ironworks, houses and stables, a lumber house, merchants of various sorts, a post office, at least one school, sawmakers, shipbuilders, taverns, tailors, teachers, an undertaker, waiters, and numerous warehouses and wharfs (Kornwolf 1976:130-131). This implies a greater center of commercial activity in Surry than the county can claim today. Efforts
to establish towns in the county had begun around 1690 and continued through 1730. Both Cabin Point and Cobham appeared to function throughout the years of 1730-1770, both declining after the Revolutionary War. Upper Chippokes Creek was navigable nearly to Cabin Point, and a major colonial road for bringing tobacco and other crops to Surry and for shipping them down the James to ports as far away as England led to Cabin Point. Currently Route 602, this road started out as an Indian trail. An Act of Assembly in 1792 required an inspector of flour to be appointed at Cabin Point, where flour had long been exported to England, having been made in nearby mills (Bohannan 1927:66). Cobham and Gray’s Creek warehouses served the central and eastern portions of the county.
Figure 1: Map showing various locations within Surry County

Because the plantation economy of Colonial Southside Virginia provided little stimulus to the development of towns or manufacturing areas, and the great plantations were veritable villages unto themselves, the government faced difficulties in effectively regulating imports, exports, and exchange. As a result, Cobham, like Cabin Point, came to be as a result of the Act of Assembly in 1691 requiring Justices to lie out towns in the counties for the distribution and storage of agricultural products as well as other products. Cobham was located at the mouth of Gray’s Creek on the east bank of Scotland Neck (Fig.1). The earliest survey of the town was in 1738 and shows 49 surveyed lots (Reps
1972:91). This early survey may represent but a portion of the town as more than 49 lots are referenced in land records. Cobham consisted of several warehouses that provided storage for tobacco, and many stores where those selling their crops could buy products imported from England and other American colonies (Reps 1972:89). In 1752 Billison Snipes kept a tavern and ordinary at Cobham, giving the local plantation owners a place to eat, drink, and gamble. Snipes was brought before Court in 1754 for not keeping the road to the creek in good repair (Kornwolf 1976:135), so that obvious methods were being employed to upkeep the town. During the Revolutionary War, the British army under Cornwallis passed through Surry, landing at Cobham from Jamestown. The Queens Rangers under Lieutenant Colonel Simcoe crossed here after their fight with Lafayette at Greenspring. The main ferry landing into Surry was at Cobham from Jamestown, and this is one of the routes by which people in Surry traveled to Williamsburg. The rate of the ferry in 1792 was 21c for a man and the same for a horse (Bohannan 1927:72). Despite its use as a ferry terminus, Cobham was deserted after the Revolutionary War: Martin’s Gazetteer in 1836 refers to the “ancient town of Cobham” already falling into ruin.

In the late eighteenth century Surry County began to show signs of growth. Robert MacIntosh owned a tavern at the “crossroads” across from the present day Surry Courthouse. MacIntosh’s Tavern was built probably before the Revolutionary War, and is mentioned as early as 1782 (Kornwolf 1976:149). He donated land here in 1796 for the building of the courthouse which begat the Town of Surry. A Justice William Edwards was mentioned in this deed. Though the courthouse’s first trial was held after William
Edwards VI had died, this crossroads and MacIntosh Tavern were no doubt a central meeting place for the gentleman gentry of the county.

Large plantations such as those along the James had their own landings, warehouses, mills, shops, and stores. These plantations were basically small villages along the river, totally independent and in little need of large towns. The Edwards family had claimed vast holdings along the James River across from Jamestown. From Pleasant Point to Chippokes the Edwards family owned such plantations as Pleasant Point, Cedarfields, Mount Ivy, and Chestnut Farms. No known dimensions exist for the Edwards plantation of Chestnut Farms, though Wakefield, considered a large plantation within Surrey County, was fairly small by the standards of Carter's Grove or Stratford Hall (Kornwolf 1976:7).

The builders of prominent plantations in Surry such as Claremont Manor and Four-Mile Tree were among the most affluent planters of the eighteenth century yet their houses also are both small and provincial when compared to houses of that status and date elsewhere. An exception to this was Mount Pleasant, home of the influential Cocke family. Mount Pleasant's two-story height was built entirely in brick with flanking wings extending its breadth to about 100 feet. Mount Pleasant was hardly a large house, say in comparison to Westover, but within the context of Surry County it must have been quite impressive (Kornwolf 1976:7). Wakefield is the original seat of the Harrison family in America, a family that included a signer of the Declaration of Independence and two Presidents of the United States. Other prominent plantation families included the Brownes of Four Mile Tree and Pipsico plantations that intermarried with the Edwards
family. The Edwards, Cocke, and Browne families often intermarried, a common practice amongst the elite of the time.

The Edwards of Chestnut Farms lived during an amazing time, as the latter half of the eighteenth century brought widespread changes to the colonies. The French and Indian War, which began on the Virginia frontier in 1753, caused Britain to levy new taxes and to impose new restrictions upon settlement and development of new territories in 1763. Parliamentary Acts restricted free trade and navigation, imposed unpopular taxes on items such as molasses (1733) and sugar (1764), while the Stamp Act of 1765 coupled with the doubling of the Export Tax the year before put severe strains on Northern merchants. The trickle down effect on Southern planters was apparent. Tobacco prices were persistently low, the economy sluggish, the dependence and indebtedness to British merchants growing, as well as the feared tyranny and turmoil in the Church of England. The complaints of these southern planters, their northern merchants, and the western land speculators served to “unite” an otherwise diverse continent into what would become a country. While great minds met at taverns across the water and changed the course of human events, and while armies marched on battlefields across the land, those gentleman of Surry County--the Edwards family of Chestnut Farms and their neighbors--saw their way of life change in the midst of revolution. William Edwards VI’s role in the Surry County Militia suggests that the family were not loyalists; though they had much to lose, they must have been stirred by the embers of freedom’s fire to launch themselves in the great event of their time. Surry County’s late eighteenth-century history and that of its prominent families is tied to the Revolutionary War, leaving the county and its people forever changed.
Chapter 3:
The History of the Edwards Family

A William Edwards (I) was an early resident of Surry County and is mentioned among the dead in 1624. He may have been the father of William Edwards II (c. 1615-c. 1673) who is mentioned as a merchant in 1644 (WMQ 1906:79). William II appears to have been an affluent member of the county, as he held various advantageous positions such as County Clerk (1653-1673), Burgess (1652-3, 1657-8), Clerk of the Governor’s Council, and was one of the justices of the peace. Using the headright system – where one received fifty acres of land for each person brought to the colonies - he patented substantial amounts of territory. He founded the family home of Pleasant Point and lived there with his wife Dorothy, herself among the headrights he received. William and Dorothy produced at least three sons. At the time of his death in 1673 the family was one of the more prominent names in the county and owned 2,290 acres.

William Edwards III (d. 1698) inherited his father’s estate at Pleasant Point and resided there with his bride, Ann Mansfield, daughter of George Mansfield. He followed his father in service in the House of Burgesses, as well as County Clerk from 1673 to 1698. Thus Surry County’s precious surviving seventeenth-century records are almost entirely the work of these two Edwards men. William III served as Clerk of the General Court in 1688 and signed the Bacon’s Rebellion report in 1676-1677. He also served as clerk of the Council of the Colony in 1694 (WMQ 1906:79). His social standing in the county allowed for other positions of prominence, such as being named a Trustee of the “as yet unnamed town” of Cobham (Bohannan 1927:71). Though he may have spent much of his time at Jamestown, where he owned a lot near the tower and another near...
Orchard run, William III was granted eight patents in Surry County between 1678 and 1691. Records show that while serving as a member of the House of Burgesses, William III collected headrights for nine blacks between these same years (Parent, Jr. 2003:273). The use of black headrights was an advantage to the great planter class, and Governor Francis Nicholson, acting on pressure from the crown, put a stop to this practice in April of 1699 (Parent Jr. 2003:45). Nevertheless, William III was one of the pre-1700 great planters who could take advantage of this landgrab. The additional patents allowed him to leave his heirs nearly 4,000 acres in Surry County (Kornwolf 1976:99). His three sons took this vast acreage and most likely established the various Edwards plantations – Cedarfields, Mount Ivy, and Chestnut Farms – southeast along the James River. The elder son William IV inherited Pleasant Point, fathering seven children there from 1700 to 1720, making it necessary to construct and expand the existing superstructure of the house (Kornwolf 1976:101).

William IV continued to hold the rewarding Edwards’ family occupations, serving the county as Burgess from 1702-1706, and as Sheriff in 1713. He married twice and his first wife was Elizabeth, daughter of Colonel Benjamin Harrison, councilor. She died at age seventeen and is buried at Jamestown (WMQ 1906:80). Elizabeth bore William IV a son, Benjamin. His unknown second wife bore William V, Micajah, and Mary. His will of 1722 was witnessed by his “good friends” Phillip Ludwell Esq., Nathanial Harrison Esq., and Doctor Archibald Blair, all renowned gentleman of high social rank (Surry County Deed Book 1715-1730 pt.2: 480-483). Benjamin Edwards is executor of his father’s estate, which is valued at £1559 and includes fifty slaves. Benjamin also inherited the family’s main estate at Pleasant Point. William V was given
the “old plantation on Crouche’s Creek”, and three other tracts of land in various places around the south side. However, evidence exists that suggests William V comes into possession of the lands comprising Chestnut Farms at some point, possibly inheriting the lands there from one of his siblings or cousins.

William Edwards V 1714-1771

A grove exists near the area chosen for excavation. In this grove lies the tabletop tomb of William Edwards V, 1714-1771. For fifty-seven years this man enjoyed life along the James River in the county of Surry, inhabiting the same plot of ground that my family and I have called home. It is possible that William V is responsible for the construction of the manor house that gives the land its current name of Chestnut Farms. Now he lies forgotten, a slab of concrete covered over with vines and dense flora, alone in a shaded insect-thick glade in the middle of a plowed field. It is here I can be accused of seeing too much romance in the practice of archaeology, but for me, archaeology allows us to see into the past and to recreate the lives of forgotten people, allowing them to live again in a scientifically unique way.

William Edwards V was a scion of already well-established gentlemen in Surry County. William V’s siblings remained prominent in the county, his brother Benjamin following his father as Sheriff. Benjamin also served as Justice of the Peace alongside his brother. Benjamin died in 1750 and his daughters Hannah and Sarah married into other well-known Surry County families, the Brownes of both Pipsico and Four Mile Tree plantations. The main Edwards estate of Pleasant Point, previously owned by second son Benjamin, comes into possession of the Browne family in 1758, and presumably William
V is then left to carry the Edwards name in high style along the James River at Chestnut Farms.

William represented the family well with gentlemanly positions in Surry County, serving as Justice of the Peace, and Tobacco Inspector at Gray’s Creek (Boddie 1948:156). Positions such as justice of the peace, sheriff, militia commander, clerk of the court, or magistrate of the court were all considered “major offices” and appointed to gentleman (Parent Jr. 2003:33). Various members of the Edwards family held all of these positions throughout the eighteenth century. William must have worked well with Sheriff Benjamin Edwards since gentleman justices of the county oft times awarded creditors with an execution against their debtors and county gentleman sheriffs were rewarded with a sort of “combat pay” for the task of seizing the debtor who sometimes fought back (Holton 1999:60-61). County Sheriffs seized the property of indebted individuals and auctioned off their possessions to satisfy their creditors (Holton 1999:63). The Edwards brothers’ roles in these affairs surely solidified their status in the eyes of their peers. On the other hand, such positions did not always put gentlemen into favor with those around them, for they were able to take advantage of issues such as land patents and monetary recompenses (Parent Jr. 2003:34).

The Virginia Act of 1713 first tried to establish a proper inspection of tobacco leaving the state, with Governor Spotswood hoping it would eliminate trash tobacco and place Virginia raised tobacco as the most desirable of all leaf, and thereby rescue the fallen crop from the recession into which it had fallen. Large tobacco planters along the James must have opposed this act because it greatly increased the cost of transporting their tobacco to inspection stations. John Custis IV, a resolute challenger of the Tobacco
Inspection Act, said that tobacco inspectors were “not even fit to wear Negro clothes,” a testimony not only to his ill opinion of the act but to the fittings of slavery as well (Parent 2003:228). The British merchants sided with the planters because the act also added to their overall expenses, and they had complaints about the inspector’s abilities to pick the best of the crop, and British authorities dissolved the act in 1717. Tobacco fell into disfavor again in the 1720s and Virginia once more attempted to pass inspection laws, finally passing the Inspection Act of 1730 (Middleton 1984:137). Tobacco inspectors were appointed by the county courts, provided an annual salary, and obliged to refrain from the trade itself. These officials were empowered to break open the hogsheads of tobacco and remove or burn any trash, issuing “crop” notes specifying weight and type of tobacco for the planter to exchange. Forgery of these notes was made a felony (Middleton 1984:135). In 1726 the Surry County records list the sort of tobacco grown as “Arronoco”, though divergent species existed by the middle of the century since for the purposes of inspection and trade all tobacco was listed under the names of “oronoco” – a variant spelling - and “sweet-scented” (Boddie 1948:156). The increasing number of varieties made it difficult for the tobacco inspectors to classify the leaf, so toward the end of the century almost all tobacco was classed as oronoco (Middleton 1984:110). Poorly chosen inspectors had trouble identifying proper leaves and types, which could lead to money loss or underhanded dealings with tobacco that should have been burned. It was, therefore, prudent for the courts to select wisely, and trusted gentlemen of the county became the obvious choices.

In 1737, William was named Tobacco Inspector at Gray’s Creek. Warehouses were erected at convenient posts along the navigable rivers about twelve to fourteen
miles from one another, which in Surry included one at Gray’s Creek and another at Cabin Point (Middleton 1984:415). The previous year the warehouse at Gray’s Creek had burned and over eighty hogsheads of tobacco were lost. The House of Burgesses ordered compensation for those who lost, and William V became the inspector there when the warehouse was rebuilt the following year. In 1732 the salary of the inspector at Cabin Point was £50 per annum while the one at Gray’s Creek received £30 per annum (Boddie 1948:160). Middleton suggests the salaries varied from £25 to £60 depending on the importance of the place where the inspector served, and the inspector was obliged to give oath and bond of security in £1,000 sterling (Middleton 1984:415). Surely then only the gentry of the county could be trusted in this endeavor. Additional “perks” of the job were that inspectors received cash for prizing – or grading - each certain weight of tobacco and 30 pounds of tobacco from each cask (Middleton 1984:416). This could greatly supplement their yearly salary and well as put them in positions to curry favor with other gentlemen planters in the area. So, while his brother followed their father as Sheriff and trustee to the town of Cobham, serving also as Justice of the Peace for Surry County, William Edwards V too served as Justice of the Peace and the enviable position of tobacco inspector, establishing his name in the county and affording him the wealth to obtain the items of a lavish lifestyle.

William V made his last will and testament on June 9, 1771. In this document he leaves his beloved wife Martha 29 slaves and divides the rest, a total of 50, amongst his nieces, nephews, and brothers. The names of his slaves fit the pattern of some colonial gentry who could mock their slaves by naming them like pets; from classical antiquity Edwards chose names such as Titus or Kato, while demoralizing names such as Africa
Bob, Little Africa, Ebo, and Oronoker reinforced his control over the enslaved (Parent 2003:227).

Though his brothers and fathers before him bore numerous offspring into the Edwards’ family line, William and Martha produced no children. With no heirs to leave his holdings to, William gives his land and household furniture, along with many slaves, to his wife. Upon the death of Martha Edwards, the will states that everything passed to his nephew, William Edwards VI, son of Micajah, William V’s brother who passed the previous year. William Edwards VI also received four slaves and “fifty pounds in money” from his uncle. However, when reading the probate of William VI, one can assume that other slaves came to him after Martha’s death for there are seven matching names and the “boy” Sam in William V’s will, is later mentioned as the “Negro man” Sam in William VI’s probate, while the “girl” Sal is later listed as having two children of her own. Therefore, it is also projectable that artifacts of earlier dates found within the feature may represent items inherited by the later William from his wealthy uncle. William V requests in his testament that his estate “be not inventoried nor appraised” and appoints his wife executor of his will. Two years later an advertisement in the Virginia Gazette called for any “persons indebted” to the estate of “William Edwards, deceased” to “pay their accounts immediately” (Virginia Gazette 8 Feb. 1773).

William Edwards VI d. 1797

It is not known when William VI was born, or his father before him. But he was old enough for service during the Revolution and to have fathered his first son, William VII, in 1780. When his father Micajah died in 1770, followed by his uncle William V, in
1771, William VI, inherited vast acreages of land in Surry and Southampton Counties. Already a beneficiary of the great Edwards family name within the county, William VI followed in his kindred’s footsteps with positions of prestige and items of opulent possession.

William VI married Susannah “Sally” Edmunds of Sussex County and produced four sons, the eldest being William Edwards VII (1780-1827). William VI was the elder of four brothers and must have been the elder of the entire Edwards cousin line at the time of his uncle’s death. Or it is possible he just curried favor with William V because of his name. Nonetheless, his inheritance of the lands, holdings, and slaves, set him up in style to carry on the tradition of gentlemanly status within the county. William VI was elected first lieutenant in the Surry County militia on March 28, 1780, and promoted to Captain on May 23rd of the same year (Boddie 1948:160). It is possible that this county gentleman wanted to look the part of the fighter whether he ever saw action or not. This may explain the presence of the Continental Army Officer’s button recovered from Feature 1 (Fig.9). Though just a militia officer he wanted to present as professional an image as possible to maintain his status. William VI also followed his relation by his involvement in the tobacco inspection at Gray’s Creek, contracted, as a “gentleman”, to upkeep and sustain the inspection station there.

William VI must have been gravely ill at some point in the summer of 1791, for his last will and testament was written on September 2nd of that year. The reason for speculation as to his health surfaces in the fact that his wife was pregnant at the time and William stated what he wanted to leave the child “if” it were a male. This hints that he did not plan to live long enough to know the sex of the child. It also hints as to the male
ego at the time, as there is no mention of the consequences of the baby being female. Luckily for the child he was born male, and luckier that the father was there to see the birth. William VI did not die that summer and did not pass away until April of 1797, however no amendment to the previously written will was done. Robert Edwards, executor and brother to the deceased, gave oath before the court that the will was still valid. Richard Cocke and several notable gentlemen of the county professed that the document was written in the recognizable handwriting of William Edwards VI.
Chapter 4:

Research Methods and Interpretive Framework

Information relevant to a study of the gentry’s position in Surry County ranges from written sources such as local history, wills, probate inventories, and dusty court documents, to the literal dust of the ground at Chestnut Farms plantation. Information was gathered on the Edwards family using modern writings on Surry County, eighteenth-century court documents such as wills and probates, and the archaeological research conducted at Chestnut Farms plantation.

Twentieth Century Written Sources

Few written sources on Surry County history exist and none have been written in the last thirty years. A. W. Bohannon’s 1927 work, Old Surry: Thumb-Nail Sketches of Places of Historic Interest in Surry County, Virginia, and John Boddie’s, Colonial Surry, are outdated sources with numerous errors. In 1976, architectural historian James D. Kornwolf wrote his Guide to the Buildings of Surry and The American Revolution. This is the best source on Edwards family history, even though it is also filled with minor flaws, mostly due to Kornwolf’s apparent use of Bohannon and Boddie. Kornwolf’s work focuses on the buildings of the county, but he also provides the history behind the structures he describes. His research undoubtedly relied heavily on interviews and oral histories and therefore must be read with care, since it is possible that informants may have exaggerated the importance of historical people and events associated with their land. The common use of the name William in the Edwards family no doubt threw the researcher off—an experience that I shared when attempting to sort through the
documents and understand exactly who was being written about. Eight successive William Edwards appear in the genealogy from the family’s beginnings in Surry County through to the early nineteenth century.

Despite problems, these three volumes on local history provided useful information in building a history of the Edwards family in Surry County. From clues given in these books, and from court documents, other documents were consulted which can be used to put more flesh on the bones of the Edwards lives. For example, when I found that William VI severed as Tobacco Inspector of the county, I was able through extensive readings on this occupation during the Colonial era to give this Williams’s history a fuller and richer reading.

Eighteenth Century Written Sources

William Edwards appears numerous times in court records as well as in an item published in the Virginia Gazette after his death (Virginia Gazette 8 Feb. 1773). Useful information from these sources added to my ability to reconstruct William Edwards’s life in more detail. William Edwards V and VI both left wills and William VI left a detailed probate inventory. The wills are glorious examples of the mindsets, family relations, and wealth of the deceased, while the probate inventory alone reveals numerous clues to the lavish lifestyles enjoyed by the owner of the listed items. William V requested in his will that no probate be taken of his estate, but William VI’s probate was extensive and detailed, listing his library books individually, as well as assigning value to all listed items. One can take this single document and construe what this man’s life was like by linking the items in his possession to his daily activities and routine.
Research in the Surry County courthouse revealed precious examples of probate inventories from Surry County throughout the eighteenth century. Data was compiled from probates dating from 1770 through 1783. The limitations of colonial records research can be significant and sometimes border on the comical; for example, at some point during 1783, a new county clerk emerges whose handwriting is practically illegible to one inexperienced in documentary research. This limited the data available for analysis to the fourteen years before 1783, but this period is within the consumer revolution enjoyed by the elite, as well as within the spending years of William VI. Given that he died fourteen years later (1797), this well-documented timeframe gives us a good picture of the time when he was acquiring material goods that he enjoyed throughout the remainder of his life. This study therefore focuses on those who perished in the county within the years between 1780 and 1797. These records also provide information on Williams’ peers; their estates will be compared to his in order to shed light on his financial and possible social standing within the county. The sample includes 129 probates that I collected for these years at the Surry County courthouse. Within this sample, total estates were tabulated as well as amenities. These comparative data expose the immense wealth enjoyed by William Edwards VI and a select few when compared to the rest of the county.

William Edwards VI’s probate was also compared to that of other notable elites in Williamsburg, Yorktown, and Surry County. Peyton Randolph was chosen from Williamsburg, and General Thomas Nelson from Yorktown. Both lived and died within the period of William Edwards VI’s lifetime, and both are well known and established members of the urban elite. All of these elite probates were scored on amenities indices.
developed by Carr and Walsh (Carr and Walsh 1988); they were also scored using Paul Shackel’s listing of items that enforced hegemonic control (Shackel 1993). Estate values were compared along with common items possessed by both the rural and urban gentlemen.

Archaeological Research

Archaeological evidence was gathered at Chestnut Farms plantation in Surry County, the home of the Edwards family throughout the late seventeenth and into the early nineteenth centuries. In November of 2000, initial research was conducted in the form of Phase I field surveys in order to determine whether Chestnut Farms was an archaeologically significant and potentially informative site within Surry County.

The initial Phase I survey revealed numerous artifact concentrations, and assisted in the location of Phase II test trenches. Based on oral history, the site of the eighteenth-century Chestnut Farms manor most likely exists beneath the current farmhouse, limiting Phase II research to the quest for outbuildings, ditch lines, trash pits, or hopefully a well. After two unproductive test units, the decision was made to extend the Phase I survey through shovel testing. Thirty-eight shovel tests were conducted, each revealing artifacts and brick fragments. Two shovel tests revealed a possible foundation; a larger test unit was then opened up in the center of what turned out to be an 11’ x 8’ cellar dating from 1750-1800. The contents of the cellar included highly valuable and extravagant artifacts, and it was at this point that my research question—whether or not Surry possessed its own brand of elites comparable to the urban elites of Williamsburg—was formulated.
At the time of excavation no comparable archeological site was known within Surry County. Some 234 sites within Surry County were recorded in the Department of Historic Resources in Richmond, Virginia, but few of them had been examined beyond the survey stage and the sites that had been more fully investigated were prehistoric. Thus the excavation within the cellar feature at Chestnut Farms was the first of its kind in the county and presented the Surry Historical Society with much to buzz about.

In 2006, while this thesis was being written, a second elite site in Surry was under investigation. Phase III archaeological work began at Mount Pleasant Plantation in Surry County conducted by James River Institute of Archaeology (JRI), under the direction of Nicholas Luccketti. Mount Pleasant was the home of the Cocke family during the eighteenth century. The Cocke family could easily be considered gentry as they served in the House of Burgesses and held various other prominent positions within the county.

**Conceptual Frameworks**

There are several relevant models of study on the subject of the difference between urban and rural elites. Carr and Walsh’s (1988) probate analysis examines the way material goods were used to bestow position in a social structure, the role of style and demand in prompting economic growth, and the ways in which people can create their own connotations for material goods produced by themselves or by others. The historical and anthropological study of consumerism is another avenue of research that can lead to better depth of understanding into the gentility’s mindset during the eighteenth century. Consumerism is the cultural association between humans and the goods and services they purchase (Martin 1993b: 142). Behaviors during these purchases,
the institutions providing the material, and the ideas behind obtaining these goods are all part of consumerism studies. Researchers look into the minds of the people involved in the act of purchasing goods to question the meanings that the buyers assign to these material goods. Consumption studies have thus become another one of many lenses through which historians refract the lives of the people of the past and their involvement in a system of goods that was increasing quickly by the eighteenth century. This stress on the cultural behavior of consumers has, however, come from several directions, not just from history (Carson 2003:341). For example, interest might focus on economic or symbolic product values, or move to notions of taste, style, social competition, or to just the emotional pleasures provided by the purchase of new materials. What unites the various disciplines that conduct consumerism studies is a break from the traditional historical focus on the makers of these material goods, and a focus instead on the buyers and users (Martin 1993b: 142).

Anthropologists can begin to view consumption as a primary form of human communication and consumer goods as symbols that present a visually comprehensible landscape (Carson 2003:341). Using consumerism as a framework gives new insights into the study of the relationship of people, possessions, and ideas in our past. The study of consumerism eventually moves the academic insight from institutional forces to personal choices. Anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz have directed historical studies towards the evidence of ritual and cultural behavior (Geertz 1973). The eighteenth-century Chesapeake gentry class and their attempts to maintain hegemonic control through the manipulation of their material world is an example of this behavior. Studying the characteristics of the physical world that are customized by cultural
behavior eventually stresses the ways human-made items fit together or interacted with society. In the following sections we will consider each of these relevant areas of scholarship and their possible application for an understanding of the Edwards family of Chesapeake.

Rural vs. Urban Studies

In attempting to place the Edwards family within a context comparable to the world of the elites of Williamsburg, the contrast between rural and urban environments must be addressed. Lois Carr and Lorena Walsh compared probate inventories from rural counties in York, Virginia, and Somerset and Anne Arundel County, Maryland, to urban probates from Yorktown, Williamsburg, and Annapolis (Carr and Walsh 1988). They looked for items of luxury and comfort, and developed an “amenities index” for the items listed in their inventory. Twelve kinds of items were selected based on their ability to add comfort and ease to one’s life. These items were: coarse earthenware and bed or table linen for convenience and sanitation; table knives, forks, and fine earthenware for refinements in conveniences and for increasing elegance at the table; spices for variety in diet; books for signs of leisure time and religion; and wigs, watches or clocks, pictures, and silver plate for signs of luxury and display (Carr and Walsh 1994:69). The selected items reflect convenience, sanitation, refinement, elegance, religion, luxury, and leisure time, all elements of the genteel lifestyle. Counting these items in a particular probate produces an amenities index score from zero to twelve based on an item’s presence or absence, with one point being awarded for the presence of the item within the probate.
The presence or absence of these amenities determined the estate owner’s score and revealed periods of change.

Carr and Walsh’s study shows that the artifacts of genteel behavior entered not only the households of the affluent and middling planters but in limited ways, those of the poor as well. At all levels of wealth, people who died in Annapolis, Williamsburg, and Yorktown scored higher than did country dwellers. When broken down by items the index tells us something of social groups, at least as material goods can define them.

The index also enabled the researchers to summarize differences between rural and urban lifestyles. In a second, more detailed study a 24-item amenities list was developed including added luxuries such as carriages, gaming tables, and specialized serving dishes. Carr and Walsh experimented with this expanded list but the results did not produce drastically different numbers for rural and urban estates due to the paucity of these added amenities in the probate inventories. Only the wealthiest individuals possessed these items and the mean scores were therefore not affected, though the study did show that few rural decedents owned any of these items compared to those within the towns (Carr and Walsh 1988:114).

Using this simple scoring process, William Edward’s probate can be compared to that of other well-known elites of Williamsburg, Yorktown, and Surry County. Changes in these amenities scores can give insight into social and economic change going on in the counties as well as the differentiation between rural and urban lifestyles.

Paul Shackel’s 1993 work, *Personal Discipline and Material Culture: An Archaeology of Annapolis, Maryland, 1695-1870*, also examines rural and urban differences and focuses on the way both elites used material goods to force hegemonic
control over their environments. Shackel also explores how individuals and groups actively used material goods to define power relations and create social hierarchies. His study examined the introduction and use of items found in probate inventories that indicated the new standardizing and specific behavior implemented through modern etiquette. The use of these new items reflected the changing social relations amongst the different wealth groups and the ways that the elite differentiated themselves from other groups during times of social volatility. Shackel selected items that gave the gentry control and segmentation over their environment. These items included clocks or scientific instruments, sets of tableware, cups, plates or saucers, chairs, napkins, tea tables, and hygiene and sanitary products. ShakeTs unique amenities listings included items that aided the gentry in this hegemonic control over time, space, and social meaning. This research will show where William Edwards VI’s probate was ranked on Shakel’s amenities list along with other famous elites.

Shackel’s work concentrates on showing that the differential in material goods between elites and other members of society peaked in the 1720s; this was followed by a period in which the middle classes gained access to luxury goods, before another peak in the 1760s further distanced the elite from those trying to emulate them. Therefore, Shackel’s work supports the argument that material items and ritual could be used to form and firm social relations and cultural legitimacy, and as more of the population gained access to these goods and ritual the elites further distanced themselves with even higher-class goods and manners.
Consumerism Studies

The aforementioned studies, especially Carr and Walsh's work, can offer insight into the world of consumption and the purchasing power enjoyed by the elite class. The desirability of owning material goods in order to distance oneself from others is closely linked to the availability of those goods, as well as the potential purchaser's ability to afford them. Consumerism studies (Carr and Walsh 1994, Carson 2003, Gibb 1996, Martin 1993, 1993b, Weatherill 1988) also look towards the availability of material goods. Rural consumers might have had difficult access to goods compared to their urban neighbors, but enough evidence exists to show that most rural inhabitants could still come to town a few times a year or order from catalogs. Members of the planter elite subscribed to *Country Magazine*, Georgian pattern books, or other smart British periodicals illustrating the most fashionable styles (Breen 1985:129). For tobacco inspector William Edwards, there was also an opportunity to trade tobacco for goods through British merchants that he would have dealt with first hand. A study of the history of the Edwards family pedigree alongside their chronicled occupational rewards serves to show that the affordability of luxury items was probably not a hurdle the Edwards family needed to face. The family standing in society helped to gather important positions for Edwards men, and these positions in turn created more revenue sources. These incomes along with their plantation labor-based profits provided an obvious opportunity to afford luxury goods. Items used to increase income – flax making tools, spinning wheels, beehives, and orchard products--were present in the probate inventory, showing that Edwards VI adapted during periods when tobacco crops failed and that he supplemented his income to allow his purchasing to continue. Economic
diversification contributed to a rising standard of amenities (Carr 1988), and the way William Edwards may have boosted his income will be explained later in this paper (page 91-92). Once accessibility and affordability have been established in consumer studies, researchers turn toward a more anthropological way of looking at their data sets, examining desirability (Martin 1993, Martin 1993b). The desirability of material goods is culturally specific. If researchers agree that material goods were assigned specific meanings and that these goods enabled their users to gain standing in the community, then the desirability of achieving that gain becomes a human factor that consumerism studies can reveal. Consumerism studies can help show the degree to which the importance of status, or the valued association with high status can determine a cultural legitimacy that anthropologists can then better study. So, applying concepts defined by consumerism studies to the inventory of material goods owned by William Edwards VI and his contemporaries will help place the Edwards family within their material world. A comparison of the material goods accumulated by elites in urban and rural settings with those of Edwards will show the meanings behind his desire to own these goods and the power situations he could find himself enjoying. Ultimately these comparisons will show that the rural elite of Surry County shared the same lofty ambitions as their urban neighbors.
Chapter 5:
Archaeology and Material Culture Studies

Archaeology is another method by which to study the differences between urban and rural elites in the eighteenth century. Archaeologists deal directly with material remains, and yet to study material culture is to study consumer behavior by examining the shifts in intellectual feelings about the principal relationships between humans and society (Martin 1993b: 143-144). Direct evidence of material culture valuable for dating noteworthy changes in consumer behavior can be discovered through archaeological research. However, it is crucial for archaeologists to contemplate the assortment of meanings that artifacts hold in social contexts, which can in turn be used to examine relationships in communities. Understanding the connotation of archaeologically recovered artifacts relies on understanding local social context and public ritual (Goodwin 1999:209). One starting point inherent throughout the study of the past through consumerism and archaeology is that material goods were, as they still are, diagnostic of behavior and manners. They had symbolic significance as well as physical characteristics and functional uses (Weatherill 1988:5). The anthropological study of consumerism and the archaeological study of materialism intersect at one key theme, the interaction of people, ideas, and material culture.

Material goods are created, circulated and consumed while individuals place social and economic values upon them. Since the changing relationship between items,
values and people has a lot to do with the organization of daily life under developed
capitalism, the study of material things in their milieu should provide informative data on
the changing social, ideational and economic patterning attendant upon this transition that
merely documentary evidence will not. If we understand that material culture is active
and that social actors, such as the eighteenth century gentry class, manipulated its
meanings in attempts to maintain constancy and control over the rules that governed
everyday social relations, then archaeology is important for providing insight into those
material artifacts. The everyday artifacts which archaeologists unearth are fashioned
within certain relations such as those between maker and buyer or rich and poor, and are
used and upheld within other social relations; that they might help to alter those relations.
Artifacts brought to light by archaeologists often work in more understated ways making
archaeological study difficult and theory problematic. However, archaeological analysis
is even more potentially useful as a means of providing thoughtful insight into changing
social relations, on the principle derived from cultural anthropology that what is most
important is often the most taken for granted (Johnson 1996:6-7).

The elite of the eighteenth century used a myriad of means to create new roles in
their environment. Using material culture and the associated meanings behind it, they
played out social strategies to enhance their position in society. Anthropological studies
of consumerism as well as archaeological research can offer insights into the
relationships between behavior of the eighteenth century elites and the material culture
they acquired and used in an effort to define their social status (Hodder 1986:4-13).
Artifacts are created by individuals, purchased by individuals, and used by individuals to
form contextual relationships within their living environment. Archaeology thus raises
the question of the relationship between the individual and society. By looking at the individuals within the Edwards family in Surry County, Virginia, it is hoped that insight into the mindsets of elitism will show that the difference between the urban elite and the rural elite was simply location and not a divergence in their thought process to maintain hegemonic control over their living environment.

Documentary evidence researched in the Surry Courthouse, coupled with the presence of William Edwards’ grave marker from 1771 in a grove at Chestnut Farms led me to conduct further research on the Edwards family. Knowing that a manor house named Chestnut Farms existed on the property, it was my desire to discover the remains of such a structure. I knew that archaeological research would be the best way to get material evidence of how the Edwards family lived at the site; however, such a search would have to be limited as there are standing structures apparently located at the spot of the original manor house as brick foundations were uncovered during an improvement project on the farmhouse. Therefore, my archaeological work was directed towards the fields around the main house in hopes of locating outbuildings for the main structure, or garnering evidence as to the use of the fields, either of which would yield information on the lifestyles of the inhabitants.

Phase I: Survey

Work at Chestnut Farms began with a field survey in November of 2000. Accompanied by several volunteers I walked the fields after the plow had passed and piece-plotted over 1,000 artifacts (Fig.2). These finds were logged in GPS using the Archview 3.2 software, and separated onto several maps to show concentration areas
(Sadler 2001). The concentration areas show a variation in settlement deposition and use through time of artifacts from the flat grounds near the river to the higher more aesthetic ground where the Chestnut Farms mansion may have stood. Unable to research the area where the mansion probably rested, I decided to look for outbuildings in the surrounding fields using surface concentrations from Phase I research. Three transects of shovel tests were laid out in an area (Fig. 3) previously identified as having a high concentration of artifacts (Sadler, 2001). All 38 shovel tests garnered positive results, and all but one contained brick. Those shovel tests with heavy concentrations of artifacts, as well as large amounts of brick debitage, were further investigated in Phase II testing.

Figure 2: Concentration areas from 2000 field survey
Figure 3: View of West Field showing Phase 1 Shovel Test transects and Phase II units
Phase II

A series of 2.5’ by 2.5’ test units were placed in areas where shovel tests showed high artifact density (Fig. 3). Test units 1 and 2 revealed numerous eighteenth-century artifacts within the plow zone, but no features were discovered other than plow scars. Test unit 3 was opened beneath a shovel test that had produced a whole brick, in hopes that the brick may represent a foundation. Test unit three was opened as a 5’ by 5’ unit and expanded based upon the findings of feature material. Feature 1 was located within test unit three.

"I dwell in a lonely house I know
That vanished many a summer ago,
And left no trace but the cellar walls,
And a cellar in which the daylight falls..."

-Robert Frost
"Ghost House" 1913

Feature 1

This feature was revealed after excavation as a 10’ x 8’ cellar, reaching a depth of 3.8’ from ground surface (Fig.4). The flat-bottomed cellar contained five layers of fill with various lenses and washes (Fig.6), as well as a carved earthen step down into the feature (Fig.5). Layer A was a brown sandy loam plowzone, while Layer B was a tan brown sandy loam with brick inclusions. Layer C was the deconstruction layer of brick rubble and mortar with yellow clay inclusions. Many of the bricks were a hard red
undersized brick resembling English “paving” bricks that may have been laid into the floor.

Figure 4: Feature 1 after excavation
Profile

Plowed Field

Excavated Area - cleared subsurface

Feature 1 - 18th century cellar with flat bottom and earthen step cleared to orange sandy clay subsoil.

Feature 2 - Brown and tan sandy loam

Figure 5: Feature 1 earthen cellar plan view
Layer A - Plowzone, brown sandy loam
Layer B - Brown sandy loam with brick and charcoal flecking
Layer C - Yellow silty clay with brick rubble, burnt clay, and mortar
Layer D - Dark ashy loam with charcoal
Layer E - Tan sand
Brick

Figure 6: Feature 1 profile view
Carbonized pieces of wood were also found throughout this layer. Layer D was a gray ash layer with heavy charcoal inclusions, which contained numerous artifacts, while Layer E was a tan sand wash layer mostly in the corners of the features profile (Fig.6). The stratigraphy of the soil in the cellar fill corresponds to that established by previous archaeological work on a fire-razed structure at Kingsmill Plantations in Williamsburg (Kelso 1984:85): Layer D is the ash layer from the fire above the occupational area of the cellar, Layer C represents the brick rubble from the deconstruction of the superstructure, while Layers B and A are the plowzone fill above the structure ruins (Kelso 1984:74). There is no direct evidence that this structure had brick walls surrounding it, and the bricks in the cellar may be debris from a nearby building or the remains of a collapsed chimney. One brick cut specifically for a well was discovered during excavation suggesting unrelated debris.

Typical of plantations of the period was the existence of several outbuildings for various tasks and functions. Feature 1 probably represents an outbuilding of the Chestnut Farms manor house, and may have been used as a kitchen due to the large number of ceramic vessels including plates and glasses, and kitchen related material such as knives, and spoons in the fill. Also, numerous faunal remains appeared in the feature, ranging from domestic farm animals to wild animals and a large quantity of fish bones and scales (Schmid 1972). Feature 1 also contained a pair of scissors, several thimbles, over thirty straight pins, and an abundance of buttons, which suggests the building was used for sewing as well as other domestic activities. Excavations of a contemporary slave quarter at Poplar Forest revealed the same set of artifacts, which were attributed to African-American women spending much of their time in cloth production for themselves and
their families (Heath 1999:49). Heath points out that slaves could be allowed to gather
their own personal possessions such as buckles and tools, many of which were found in
Feature 1, and that the large amount of such things discovered at Poplar Forest suggested
that Jefferson and his overseers’ accepted the slaves’ right to property (Heath 1999:64).

While the same kind of pattern could have been present at Chestnut Farms, the
quantity of artifacts in this one feature suggests a sort of “hoarding” or collecting of
artifacts discarded by the Edwards’ family. That slaves could own buckles, tools, or
dinnerware has been established and accepted here, but a handful of artifacts that were
discovered within the feature seem to be of a type that would only be available to the
Edwards’ family themselves. Ironically, Feature 1 could be used to tell the story of two
vastly different lifestyles existing at Chestnut Farms, from the meager trappings of slave
life, to the seemingly affluent Edwards’ family: it is an outbuilding that may or may not
have been occupied by slaves that will be used to shed light on the opposite opulent
lifestyles of the master and his family.

**Date of the Cellar Deposit**

Ceramics were used to establish an estimated date of the cellar feature, until a
more detailed study of the artifacts can be conducted. An abundance of pearlware was
discovered within the feature, giving clues to a late eighteenth-century date. Both blue
and green feather-edged ceramics were recovered in significant numbers. Early examples
are carefully painted with the brushwork giving the plates a feathery edge, but later as the
market was flooded a broad lateral stroke was used for expedieny. The examples of
edged pearlware discovered in Feature 1 appear to be the earlier carefully brushed
versions dating to 1780-1795 (Hume 1969:131). The absence of any whiteware (circa 1813) gives another clue to the cellar filling in sometime shortly after the death of William Edwards VI in 1797 (Hume 1969:130-131). So, with the appearance of pearlware the feature can reasonably be attributed to the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Since William V passed in 1771, odds are the feature relates to the occupation of William VI.

Artifacts associated with Elite Status

The following artifacts were selected for their association with the “badges of gentility” mentioned specifically in Breen (1985) and various notable items from other references (Bushman 1992, Carr and Walsh 1988, Shackel 1993). Historical records and known family history are one way to judge the wealth of the Edwards family, yet archaeology presents visible evidence to the holdings of the estate at Chestnut Farms. The following selected artifacts lend support to the probate inventory and provide visual details to the intricate material culture owned by the family.
Decorative Harness Brass

Figure 7: Harness brass possibly depicting William Edwards

This ornament would have adorned the leatherwork on the horses that pulled the carriage. Elaborately decorated with the bust of a man, five feathers, a clamshell, and various floral designs, this artifact may represent a heraldic image or the rebus of a family crest. Metonymic symbols such as animals and rebuses were present on heraldic devices to assist in signifying the antiquity and honor of families. These symbols would be placed prominently on items such as the coach or the horse leather in order to be seen (Johnson 1996:131). Both a chariot and a chair are listed in William Edwards VI
probate. Colonial Williamsburg Curator William Pittman says the harness brass is one of the better examples that he has seen, and this may hint at the expense of the carriage itself (William Pittman 2003, pers. comm.). Found in Layer D of Feature 1, this ornate copper alloy harness brass is undoubtedly an artifact associated with someone of gentlemanly status (Fig. 7).

In 1768, George Washington purchased an “expensive chariot,” custom-made in London, with leather interiors and his personal crest adorned on the side. In 1787, Washington was making renovations on his “prized chariot,” showing that gentleman of his stature used such vehicles to showcase their social status for decades (Ellis 2004:44). Other examples from this period list a riding chair valued at £8 in a 1755 probate (Bushman 1992:18). The “chariot” listed in William Edwards VI probate (Appendix A) was valued at £35, while another “single chair” was listed at £9. In comparison, noted planter Robert Beverly ordered in 1761 a “handsome chariot” worth £85, so Edwards’ chariot fits somewhere in the middle range of expensive riding vehicles (Breen 1985:151). In his will he leaves a “riding carriage” to his wife Susannah, possibly a third riding carriage not listed in the probate.

Finding the harness brass provides a link to these Edwards carriages and their decorative ornaments. However, the brass could also be from an earlier carriage owned by William Edwards V, since curator John Davis from Colonial Williamsburg dates the artifact to circa 1730-1740 (John Davis 2004, pers. comm.). No probate inventory exists for William Edwards V, but his will states his desire to leave “all my stock of what kind recover”, and “the stock of all my household furniture” to his “dearly beloved wife” until
her death. Upon his wife’s death the will states the stock is to be given unto his nephew, William Edwards VI.

Fancy riding carriages provided the appearance of wealth and dignity to anyone viewing the gentleman’s journeys throughout the countryside. It became important, if not necessary for Chesapeake planters of note to maintain their appearance and be seen in the fashionable coaches available to them through their dealings with the British merchants. Perhaps the planters became too dependant on their carriages, as in the example of Bernard Moore, who in 1771 resorted to begging a merchant to whom he was in debt to provide him a secondhand “Post Chariot” because this proud planter’s wife now had “nothing left to even carry her to church” (Breen 1985:144). The presence of the harness brass and the probate evidence shows that Susannah Edwards could ride to her church with head held high.
One silver watch and gold seal worth £18 is listed in the probate inventory of William Edwards VI in 1797 (Appendix A). Another watch was listed at three pounds, so we can assume the pricier timepiece was rather ornate. At eighteen pounds, the silver watch with gold seal had a greater value than either of William’s horses, *Nabob* and *Partner*, as well as a higher value than Isabel, listed as a Negro woman in the probate. To equate the watch with human life puts into perspective the value placed on luxuries of
the gentry, the social differences of the time, and to the cheapness of some lives where slaves were valued as commodities and the elderly Isabel offered little in hope of a profitable return.

Wealthy eighteenth-century gentleman carried these expensive inch-thick watches and wound them with keys hung from a watch chain or ribbon fob that hung from the watch pocket of the breeches (Tunis 1965:145). George Washington wrote in his diary about the luxuries Philadelphia offered him to purchase including “rare items” such as a gold watch chain (Ellis 2004:178). Richard Bushman writes on gentry material culture and mentions a Nicholas Ridgely who died in 1755, owning a silver watch worth five pounds. Bushman says that Ridgely needed such accoutrements to “cut a proper figure” at Kent County courts (Bushman 1992:18). Though William Edwards’ watch may have been obtained a few decades later, it still appears to have served the same purpose, aiding him in his desire to cut his own proper figure in society.

Located in Layer D of Feature 1, a copper alloy watch key appears to relate to the more expensive watch listed in William Edward’s probate. Elaborately ornate, the watch key is decorated on one side with vines, flowers, and a ribbon, and floral designs with a small humanoid face on the reverse (Fig. 8). Colonial Williamsburg curators William Pittman (2003, pers. comm.) and Eric Goldstein (2004, pers. comm.) both praised the key as one of the better examples from an archaeological context.

It took constant tinkering to keep these watches running and watchmakers did well in business in large towns such as Williamsburg. Watches were rarely made in these towns, as orders for European watch parts continued in America as late as 1835 (Tunis 1965:146). However, James Geddy is advertising watch repairs in Williamsburg in 1767,
and archaeological evidence of the Geddy property revealed delicately cast watch keys recovered in their unfinished or spoiled states and discarded around 1770 (Noel Hume 1970:24). This shows that the craftsmen were able to make elaborate watch keys in Williamsburg, even if the watches were being imported. A figure in the Noel Hume book on the Geddy archaeological excavation shows a “watch key” that resembles the key found at Chestnut Farms, though Noel Hume refers to his example as an elaborately decorated terminal for a seal or a pivoting key (Noel Hume 1970:25).

Since many colonial planters were in debt to British merchants, the 1769 Virginia Non-Importation Resolution made it appear that planters would no longer order frivolous items of luxury after this date. Items such as fancy watches were seen as the “badges of gentility,” but orders began to decline. By April 1770 many Virginians were removing the encumbrance of their debts (Breen 1985:191), but by that same year orders to the British merchants had increased by some 60 percent, making the resolutions a failure (Holton 1999:91). William Edwards could have obtained his watch before all this, or it is possible the watch key itself was cast in the Geddy foundry in Williamsburg.
Continental Army Officer’s Button

[Image of a button with 13 bars within one circle]

Figure 9: Officer's button with 13 bars within one circle, symbolizing the united colonies.

William Edwards VI was listed as a First Lieutenant of the Surry County Revolutionary Militia on March 28, 1780, and was promoted to Captain upon the resignation of Henry Crafford on May 23rd, 1780 (Boddie 1948:160). A button found in Layer D of Feature 1 displays a design that is defined by its extreme simplicity. Thirteen parallel and unconnected bars are contained within a concentric band around the edge of the button (Fig.9). The button found at Chestnut Farms measured 15mm in width and matches one found in the artifact assemblage of Flowerdew Hundred. This design represents the thirteen original colonies united under one nation to confront the British (Eric Goldstein 2005 pers. comm.). Other more elaborate Revolutionary War buttons contained a related motif of a snake with its tail in its mouth, surrounding thirteen eggs or stars (Troiani 2001:146). The various images convey a united states against the common foe. These buttons were worn by Continental Army Officers and are extremely rare. They were more likely made in Paris or London (Eric Goldstein 2004, pers. comm.).
This design was later copied and minted into a coin called the bar “copper” which was circulated in New York during November 1785 (Yeoman 2002:53).

To have documentary evidence of William Edwards VI serving as a Captain in the Surry Militia, and then to find a Continental Army Officer’s button in the feature, allows one to easily connect the two and assume the button belonged to William Edwards and adorned his Militia uniform. While most militiamen fought in whatever clothes they could muster, Edwards may have tried to look the part of Captain and gentleman.

**Tombac buttons**

Two large tombac buttons were located within Feature 1. First produced in a gold-silver alloy in Siam, "Tombac" buttons were copied in the West using a "white copper" or "white brass" alloy of brass and arsenic (Johnson 1942:7). The metal was used in some cases to imitate gold, because the rose color of the copper was softened to almost yellow by the addition of zinc, tin, or other metals. The shanks of these buttons were often soldered in place with a sort of cone-shape buildup of metal on the back. This conical base at the shank is not exclusive to Tombac, however. The colors of these buttons range from aluminum to almost a brassy color.

Tombac, like most metal buttons of the time, were generally large buttons, with some designs etched into the front. Buttons of this type are common to late eighteenth century sites of all types and buttons are generally artifacts that are hard to associate with any status, since similar buttons would have appeared on the clothing of kings or paupers. Nevertheless, Eric Goldstein viewed the buttons found in Layer D of Feature 1, as high
status artifacts due to the silver patina on both buttons (Eric Goldstein 2004, pers. comm.).

Silver Neck Stock Buckle

![Silver Neck Stock Buckle](image)

**Fig. 10: Silver Neck Stock Buckle circa 1739-1790**

Discovered in Layer B of Feature 1, this solid silver neck stock buckle contained inset stones as well as a silver chape (Fig.10). As eighteenth-century fashions changed, precious metal buckles led the way in elite buckle design. The vast majority were produced as shoe buckles, but silver buckles were also manufactured for other purposes.

Silver stock buckles were manufactured throughout the eighteenth century, and many were exquisitely made (Whitehead 2003:124). Prior to the years 1739 all silver buckles had hallmarks. The Assay Act of 1739 exempted all solid silver buckles weighing less than ten pennyweights from hallmarking, but silver buckles manufactured after 1790 all bear full hallmarks. Since the example at Chestnut Farms does not have any hallmarks upon it, it should date between 1739-1790 (Whitehead 2003:116-118).
During the time period buckles were highly visible as fashion accessories and as a statement of social rank. In 1747, *The London Tradesman* noted that: “...the best branch of buckle making is making silver buckles...set with stones” (Whitehead 2003:116). Silver buckles were a part of aristocratic dress and unsuitable for lower ranks (Bushman 1992:70-71). Good buckles were therefore necessary to promote the genteel image.

**Stag Cufflink**

![Stag Cufflink](image)

*Figure 11: Hunting button suggesting leisure time enjoyed by the Edwards’*

A rounded copper alloy cufflink was found in layer D of Feature 1. Designed onto the cufflink is a running stag jumping over a flower and vine (Fig.11). Some versions of these cufflinks exist with foxes used instead of stags. Written above the stag is the word “Tallio”, an original spelling of the word “Tallyho” in use today. Hinting at the joys of the chase and the accompanying festivities, this cufflink resembles examples found at the site of British Revolutionary barracks within the city limits of New York (Calver & Bolton 1950:225).

These sleeve-links, as well as highly decorative buckles found on Revolutionary sites, are usually attributed to either American or British officers (Calver & Bolton 1950:224). The British officers took much pride in personal accoutrements such as buckles and sleeve-links. A French ship, *Fier Roderique*, visited Hampton Roads,
Virginia, on June 8th, 1778. A document from the ship listed on board material considered desirable for use by the United States, and this list included items such as sleeve buttons, buckles, and wrist bands for shirts (Calver & Bolton 1950:227). Governor Patrick Henry of Virginia was authorized by the Continental Congress to purchase the items on the list. This date corresponds with that of feature 1. The sleeve link can be related to William Edwards's service as Captain of the Surry Militia, and used to give insight into the desirability of such items in connection with the prideful British officer.

English Baron's Bottle seal

![English Baron's Bottle Seal](image)

Figure 12 - English Bottle Seal of Baron's Coronet, drawing at right

Having bottles sealed was a costly venture yet a common practice amongst the gentility. Sealed bottles could be used to commemorate a wedding, birthday, or simply to showcase the year the wine was made. Most importantly, a sealed bottle could represent
a status symbol for the elite. The elite also began to use objects to fashion an image of
themselves and to “buttress their position in society” (Johnson 1996:182). Having sealed
bottles was simply one way for a gentleman to showcase his place in society, especially if
the bottles were on display at any social gathering. Because of the high cost, seals are
rather rare archaeologically. Of the over 20,000 wine bottles fragments excavated at
Jamestown in the 1930s-1950s, only 104 were sealed.

The bottle seal found in Feature 1 is unfortunately broken and the upper half of
the seal is missing, keeping the date or initials of its owner a mystery. However, it is
reasonable to assume the seal belonged to William Edwards, who would have coveted
such an item. The preserved half of the seal revealed something extraordinary: the
image of an English Baron’s coronet is clearly revealed in the seal’s matrix (Fig.12). The
symbol of nobility suggests that its owner was just that. Colonial Williamsburg’s curator,
William Pittman studied the seal and suggested it may have been owned by an English
Baron who shared some personal relationship with William Edwards in Surry, possibly
shipping him the wine as a gift, or token of friendship (Pittman 2003, pers. comm.).

Leaded Wine Glasses

Two small decanters and nine wine glasses are listed in the probate of William
Edwards VI, and evidence of five separate wine glasses was discovered during the
excavation of Feature 1. The leaded wine glass stems were items of cultural status and
played important roles in the rituals of entertaining guests during gentry relations.

English glassware in the eighteenth century reflected the rise of a consumer
culture in England. The fashion-conscious purchaser sought an assortment of different
styles and shapes for each drink served. Wine glasses are by far the most numerous glass form related to alcoholic beverages appearing in period documents. Elite Chesapeake society consumed large amounts of wine. Alcoholic beverages were an important part of daily life for people from all levels of society in the eighteenth century, and the gentlemen could use the act of drinking with guests to support his reputation in the rituals of entertaining and hospitality. Given, then, the importance placed upon alcoholic beverages in elite households, it is not surprising that specialized forms for serving them composed part of the household goods in most, if not all, elite Chesapeake households including that of William Edwards VI.

**Probate Analysis**

Archaeological investigation at Chestnut Farms has revealed material items that can be used to garner insight into the social relationships of the past, and a few of these material artifacts have just been described, but a probate inventory for William Edwards VI gives a better idea of the entirety of this man’s material household allowing to reconstruct a life and mindset. In this section I will compare William Edwards VI’s probate inventory with those of prominent individuals in Williamsburg (Peyton Randolph), and Yorktown (General Thomas Nelson) to show that the wealth of individuals within the plantocracy of rural Surry County could compare to those of individuals resident in nearby towns. I will compute the scores of these three gentlemen’s probates using the amenities indices introduced in the studies of Carr and Walsh (Carr and Walsh 1988) and Shackel (Shackel 1993), in order to further illustrate that William Edwards VI stood on equal ground with prominent men. To give an idea of
his economic rank within the county, probate inventories from Surry County were
gathered from the years 1770-1783 and will be used to compare with the Edwards estate.
Finally, William Edwards VI’s probate will be examined in detail via a conjectured
journey through this gentleman’s daily life.

Probates, Wills and Estates

Beginning in the earliest decades of settlements, Anglo-American colonists
carried out probate inventories of Chesapeake Bay area estates. Probates provide an
unusual opportunity to analyze material culture and early lifestyles. Unless there was a
will written to regulate the holdings, the court selected an executor for the estate. The
executor’s duties included caring for the estate, settling debts, and dividing the remainder
of the estate amongst beneficiaries. A judge of a commission of probate selected an
executor and two or three appraisers familiar with the deceased. Appraisers were also
selected based on their familiarity with the occupation of the deceased. The appraisers
inventoried and appraised the worth of the estate and determined the value of the property
in the current market. Inventories included ready money, household furniture, clothing,
slaves, livestock, crops, and land.

By studying probate records, insight into changing consumption patterns in the
Chesapeake may be gleaned. The average colonist did not produce written records. The
elite often fashioned the documents from which accepted histories have been recorded,
leaving the middle class and the poor—the largest portions of the population—largely
underrepresented. Because the property of a large cross-section of the population was
recorded in probates, these inventories make available an extensive account of both the non-elite and the elite (Shackel 1993:86).

Inventories were meant to be a realistic and truthful verification of the estate; however, appraisers often omitted items with no market value, such as small amounts of fruits and vegetables from kitchen gardens. These objects were considered perishable and not worth listing. Clothing is usually absent from the records since relations usually took ownership of these bits and pieces soon after the demise of the relative. For example, no clothing appears in the probate of William Edwards VI, though the discovery of various high social status buttons suggests his wardrobe may have been extensive.

An executor’s report significantly amplifies the records regarding an estate, as it is a concluding account on a decedent’s assets. These manuscripts included items such as the value of crops in the field at the time of death or debts not accounted for at the time of evaluation. For example, an executor’s amendment to William Edward’s probate lists “...four thousand, three hundred eighty one pounds of Bacon which was sent bygone previous to the appraisement, to Richmond...” and a handmill that was for whatever reason omitted by the appraisers at the time of inventory. Some probates also recorded funeral expenses, allowances to the executor, and costs for collecting difficult debts. The court usually subtracted these charges from the final estate value. William’s probate lists “...the dead victuals and licuors which were laid in by the testator for consumption in his family...”. The executor was usually a relative; in Edward’s case his brother Richard, allowing the high administration fee to stay within the family (Shackel 1993:87).
Several biases and deficiencies occurred during the recording of probates in the Chesapeake. The sample of estates inventoried is skewed towards the elderly since one acquired more material goods as one aged. Women held no property once they married, so only single women or widows appear in the probate inventories. Children’s property is also ignored during inventory. Slaves were considered property themselves so anything they owned was not probated. Colonists in the Chesapeake only inventoried chattel property, which included slaves, and any movable material items. Other colonies inventoried real estate as well. Even though the Chesapeake probates bore these biases, they provide detailed data and market value on bound labor, trade goods, debts receivable, household goods, and personal belongings.

Despite their biases and deficiencies, probate records are helpful for studies concerning trade and industry growth, capital distribution, social stratification, regional economic discrepancy, agricultural efficiency and practices, labor systems, slave demography, credit networks, and lifestyles. Probates also reveal patterns in the changing affiliation of goods to wealth patterns and social stratification (Shackel 1993:88). Because some 70 percent of the estates in the Chesapeake prior to the American Revolution were probated, there is an abundance of evidence available to scholars on the material culture of varying wealth groups. Probates also provide an essential record of the changing goods discovered in colonial America and are an indicator of the changing behaviors connected with these goods.
Comparisons to Urban Elites

As stated above, the inventories of Peyton Randolph and General Thomas Nelson can be used as a means of establishing a comparative framework for a study of the estate of Williams Edwards IV. Peyton Randolph was a revolutionary leader and both advisor and friend to George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. He presided over every important Virginia assembly in the years leading to the Revolution, was among the first of the colony's great men to oppose the Stamp Act, chaired the first Continental congress of 13 colonies at Philadelphia in 1774, and chaired the second in 1775. When Randolph’s estate was inventoried in 1776 he was among the wealthiest of Williamsburg’s citizens (Appendix C).

General Thomas Nelson was also a southern gentleman of his day. He served as a member of the House of Burgesses in 1774; Virginia provincial Convention, 1775; officer & commander of the Virginia Militia, 1775; delegate to the Continental Congress, 1775-77, 1779; and was elected Governor of Virginia in 1781, succeeding Thomas Jefferson. His presence at the Battle of Yorktown was instrumental in the Continental victory. Nelson’s prominence aided him in accumulating an estate nearly equal to Randolph’s, and one of the most valued in Yorktown (Appendix C).

Putting William Edwards alongside these great men highlights the fact that he is at the very least comparable to them both in estate inventory adding substance to the notion that the rural elite of Surry County were every bit as able to afford, acquire, and most importantly desire the same grand material culture as the elites of Williamsburg and Yorktown.
While Edwards was playing his own role in the politics of Surry County, we can assume he kept an interested eye upon the great struggles of his time. We know that he served in the Surry Militia and can relate that fact to the notion that all three men did their own part for their fledgling country’s stake in the Revolutionary War. One would expect no less from gentlemen.

The three men died in successive decades, Randolph in 1776, Nelson in 1789, and Edwards in 1797, though all three accumulated their wealth and estates during the onset of the consumer revolution in the 1760s and 1770s. Of the three estates Randolph’s had the highest value at £2883, followed by Nelson at £2790, and Edwards at £2025. All three estates rank amongst the very uppermost echelon of the times and contain numerous similarities in material goods. In Paul Shackel’s study of probates thirteen items were selected based on their presence in the inventory. Edwards and Randolph scored eleven for these items while Nelson scored nine. However, in Carr and Walsh’s amenities index Edwards was the higher scorer with ten; Nelson scored a nine, while Randolph scored an eight. Missing from all three men’s probates were wigs, and pictures. Style was prone to deviation from English rules in the climate of the Chesapeake, possibly deterring the gentlemen from wearing wigs, and as one English traveler noted, only the “very elevated sort” wore perukes (Rozbicki 1998:148). Although where practicable the gentry meticulously attended to approved forms, apparently these gentlemen deemed the region too uncomfortable for perukes or perhaps the post-Revolution atmosphere dictated an attempt to abandon looking too British.

Carr and Walsh have a more detailed study searching for twenty-four amenities such as carriages, gaming tables and elite tableware (Carr and Walsh 1994:114). All
three men have these items in their probates. Mahogany and black walnut furniture, looking glasses, and numerous slaves appear in all three estates as well. Edwards possessed twenty-seven slaves, Randolph twenty-eight, and Nelson fifty-two. It is interesting to point out that William’s silver watch with gold seal is valued higher than nineteen of Nelson’s slaves.

Rural and Urban Housing

One year after the death of William Edwards VI, a federal tax assessed houses according to their “elegance.” The median assessed value of urban houses was $614; nearly ten times the assessed value of $77 for rural homes (Crowley 2001:105). This was a disparity in tax liability more so than in income or wealth, especially when land was included, though it does give an indication of urban homes being more elegant. The use of material culture to enforce control could extend to the housing and plantation surroundings of the gentleman. Archaeological evidence has not revealed the extent of the Edwards’ family home, though clues to its size and comforts appear in the probate inventory. Artificial lighting indicated an atmosphere in which some household activities could take place with fewer of their customary restrictions. The genteel style of life in the eighteenth century emphasized this freedom from elemental processes and constraints by stylizing artificial lighting in the architecture, furniture, and interior design of household life. It was an urbane style that marked a households’ association with sophisticated life. Most of the rural population continued to live in houses suitable to a domestic timetable determined by the accessibility of daylight (Crowley 2001:140). It has already been discussed that William Edwards’ inventory contained several items
indicative of artificial illumination, showing that he was not refined to the hours of the daylight in conducting his social activities.

Comparison of William Edwards VI’s Inventory to Carr and Walsh Results

The probate analysis study conducted by Carr and Walsh traced the early rise of the amenities index in towns and among certain classes and occupational groups. A person’s wealth was the most important determinant of where he or she would score on the amenities index. Their research showed that the trappings of gentility arrived in the Chesapeake in the eighteenth century (Carr and Walsh 1994:61). England became impressed with the speed which shifts in fashion created in London emerged in the Chesapeake. Such changes had reached more than just the prosperous. Genteel behavior and its artifacts were used to strengthen social distinctions but were also used to bridge them. The material culture of gentility began to penetrate the households of middling planters as they aspired to achieve cultural legitimacy, and such items as tea had even reached the households of the poor (Carr and Walsh 1988:137).

As already described, Carr and Walsh’s research results showed the gradual increase of the amenities scores over time as well as differences in the lifestyles of rural and urban inhabitants. Notable exceptions existed, such as the growing taste for luxurious coaches, expensive timepieces, decorative objects, and fine sets of china amongst the rural elite, which brought about some shifts in spending priorities (Carr and Walsh 1994:117). On the rural elite estates the more servants and slaves that existed on the plantation the greater the need for household equipment necessary for their maintenance. William Edwards in rural Surry County thus becomes a notable exception
to the Carr and Walsh results. While overall estates in rural Surry would not compare in amenities scores to those in urban Williamsburg or Yorktown, the struggle for cultural legitimacy still existed within the upper crust elites of the county.

The mean amenities score for estates valued at over £491 in the four counties analyzed by Carr and Wash (York, Virginia, and Somerset and Anne Arundel County, Maryland), was 4.5 in the late 1770s. William Edwards scores a ten on the index two decades later. Carr and Walsh ended their research with 1777, and while William Edwards scores much higher than the mean scores from that timeframe, his total may reflect a gradual increase in the ownership of such luxury items. Regardless of scores and timeframes, it is his possession of these items of convenience and comfort that show his desire to attain the cultural legitimacy sought by himself and his affluent peers around him and within the urban environments.

Aside from the various earthenware and china vessels listed with Edwards’ probate (Appendix A), several of the amenities listed within the Carr and Walsh index are apparent. A silver watch with gold seal, silver sugar tongs and tablespoons, a spice mortar, tea pitchers and cups, ivory handled knives and forks, all are listed and equate onto the amenities index score. Bed and table linen are present in the form of over £150 worth of bed related items listed within the probate, including “moschetto” (mosquito) curtains, which kept the affluent man more comfortable at night. Mosquito curtains, close stools, tubs and brushes, are all items of cleanliness associated with the gentry and present in the Edwards probate. The rich were more likely to own things like chamber pots and washtubs, but these items were far from standard even in gentry households (Carr and Walsh 1994:133). Books both religious and secular are mentioned in the
amenities index and both are present in great detail within Edwards’ probate. Three bibles, three histories of the Bible, four old prayer books, and three volumes on the histories of the old and new testaments represented the religious books, while the secular books covered a wide range of interests. Books on nature by Goldsmith, Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa Harlow*, the History of Louis XIV, Henning’s Justice, and Jarrett’s sermons are some listed. Hume’s eight volumes of the History of England were mentioned in the probate and reported to equal a week’s wages (Martin 1994:181). Wigs and pictures, both missing from the Edwards estate are also missing in the probates of Randolph and Nelson, and are the two lowest ranking amenities in Carr and Walsh’s data comparing rural and urban Anne Arundel County (Carr and Walsh 1988:146-149). Even among the wealthiest estates these two amenities ranked the lowest.

Comparisons of the Edwards to Shackel’s Results

Paul Shackel’s study of the historic Chesapeake (Shackel 1993) showed that elite groups acquired new goods for the sole purpose of differentiation. Hegemonic tendencies emerged as groups expressed their character through material goods and the etiquette associated with them, thus separating themselves from others while modifying and fashioning their own identity (Shackel 1993:13). To analyze urban and rural Chesapeake data, Shackel divided the probate inventories into four wealth groups. The poorest of the inventories were estates valued between zero and £49 at the time of death; group 2 consisted of those with estate values between £50 and £225; group 3 was estate values between £226 and £490; and group 4 was estates valued at over £491. At the £225 and £490 limits, consumption rates rose considerably among estates in the colonial
Chesapeake. Carr and Walsh had previously determined these jumps to probably represent different groups, giving validation to these wealth group boundaries (Shackel 1993:94).

Shackel studied data sets from Annapolis and Anne Arundel County, compared the different rates of transmission of the new disciplining and segmenting behavior, and the different responses of urban and rural populations to social and economic crises. He also sought to determine how goods shaped and created this new order of behavior, showing their appearance most dramatically in the 1720s and again just before the American Revolution. Analyzing goods in their historical and social contexts shed light onto reasons behind consumption patterns. Shackel chose to look at certain amenities that showed how material culture could be used to maintain and enforce ritual and power relations (Shackel 1993:95). Material goods related to dining and hygiene practices became increasingly important in creating this new individuality and standardized behavior. Items that related to the segmentation of time and space were selected. These items included: watches, clocks, and scientific instruments for the measurement of land, time, and atmosphere. The select few who owned these items used them to divide and measure their surroundings. Use of these objects imposed a naturalizing philosophy that served to exhibit the elite’s control over nature by dividing it artificially but making this division appear to be natural, thus helping to legitimize their power and control (Shackel 1993:96). These items helped to create and maintain a hegemonic relationship in society, establishing the cultural legitimacy of those able to own such possessions. The discipline created and reinforced by clocks and watches is still a part of daily life in the 21st century. In Shackel’s highest wealth group clocks were present in over eighty percent of urban
estates in the 1770s, while only forty percent claimed them in rural estates of the same time period. Scientific instruments were also more prevalent in urban estates of the highest wealth group, though fewer than 25 percent of wealthy inventories possessed them in the 1770s. Clocks and scientific instruments were generally found in larger proportion amongst the elite as the lower wealth groups had little direct use for them. Regimentation and precise movement began to become part of every action and movement in the elite’s daily routines. William Edwards’s expensive watch and his spy glass fall into this subject and assisted him in regulating and scheduling his daily social life.

Shackel looked at goods associated with dining and said that wealth was expressed by items that allowed the owner to segment the dining experience, and control the new behavior associated with dining. These items included salad dishes, button boats, castors, wine glasses, sets of plates; sets of forks; sets of knives; sets of cups and saucers; sets of chairs; and napkins and functionally specific tables such as tea tables. During this time the normal dining practice was to eat with ones hands, sitting on benches, trunks or the edge of beds. A plate, spoon, and some type of drinking vessel were normal items within all wealth groups. As social stress and competition increased, people acquired new disciplining and segmenting objects in greater numbers. Shackel found this in Annapolis in the 1720s and again during the American Revolution. His studies showed that the process was similar in both rural and urban probates (Shackel 1993:101). These specialized dinner items began to separate both the dinner into parts and the diners from one another. With the exception of napkins, all of these items were present in William Edwards VI’s probate inventory. Sixty-six chairs are listed including
several sets, a tea table, butter boats, castors, sets of silverware, and much fine china all enabled Edwards to put on a fine dining experience and by doing so regulate and control his social environment at his home table. Shackel found that amongst the highest wealth group in urban Annapolis napkins were present in around forty percent of probates in the 1770s, while the rural estates of the same wealth group and time period exceeded sixty percent of inventories. Despite this evidence of the presence of napkins in rural estates none were listed in Edwards’s probate, unless disguised in the form of other linen listed.

Grooming items such as close stools, chamber pots, handkerchiefs, dressing tables, dressing glasses, shaving and wash basins, brushes, combs, and toothbrushes should not only be considered items of affluence but also objects that helped to fashion and reinforce the new behavior that sustained the enhancement of the individual. People began to obtain these items in an attempt to create expressions of individual material and wealth. The expression of individuality through hygiene and grooming were not as widespread in the rural areas of Shackel’s study, though William Edwards possesses many such items (close stool, chamber pots, shaving kit with razors, dressing table, dressing glasses) within his probate. Edwards does not list a handkerchief in his probate, making this item and napkins the only objects missing from his probate and Shackel’s listing of luxuries. Perhaps the numerous linens and clothes listed within Edwards probate served the same purpose as napkins and handkerchiefs. Regardless he matches well with those of the higher wealth groups during the 1770s in Annapolis and scores an eleven out of thirteen on Shackel’s list, compared to a score of eleven also by Randolph, and a nine by Nelson.
Shackel’s conclusion hypothesized that during times of social and economic instability, the wealthy consolidated their social and economic power. During the 1720s this occurred in Maryland, and again during the American Revolution. It is these times periods that items of control and luxury show dramatic increases within the wealthiest probates. This study can be used to show that items of luxury and hegemonic control considered by Shackel are prevalent in the probate inventory of William Edwards, showing that he too tried to regulate a form of control over the rural poor of Surry, as well as put on an attempt at equality to those in nearby Williamsburg.

Comparisons of Edwards to Surry County Probates 1770-1783

A total of 130 probates were collected from Surry County Courthouse records from the years 1770-1783, including the inventory of William Edwards VI. Inventories were searched for items of luxury and comfort, and total estate values were recorded. Using this data allows William Edwards VI to be ranked within his surroundings and showcases his vast wealth differential from most of those around him. Of the 130 probates inventoried Edwards’s estate value ranks fourth (Watkins, Degge, Putney) and is only £16 less than the Putney estate, putting him in the top three percent of the county’s elite estates. He is one of only four estates valued over £2,000, and only twelve other estates were valued over £1,000. Using the same wealth group categories created by Carr and Walsh, thirty-one percent of inventories were valued from zero to £49; twenty-seven percent from £50 to £225; twenty-eight percent between £226 and £490; and twenty-six percent over £491. Reading the data shows that eighty percent of Surry County estates from the years 1770-1783 were considered below the highest wealth group created by
Carr and Walsh. The average estate value in Surry County during the years recorded was £336, compared to William Edwards estate of £2025.

Analyzing the data from the selected probate inventories easily shows the advantage William Edwards may have enjoyed over his rural neighbors. Using the probate data cannot show that Edwards used his wealth to maintain a hegemonic control over the residents of Surry County, though it can show us the material goods he owned that others did not have the freedom to purchase. Knowing that Edwards chose to separate himself with material goods from others around him, can allow one to speculate that he did use these material goods to elevate his social standing even further than his monetary wealth allowed. What is present in the probate data of Surry County is that Edwards may not have been alone in this attempt at control of those below him. Even amongst the poorer estates a few of these material goods show up and give insight into consumer power enjoyed by all the rural residents of Surry County. One such example is the probate of one Phillip King whose estate was valued at a mere £11, though he owned a silver watch with steel chain valued at £4, or Randolph Holt whose £14 estate contained a silver neck buckle. This item may have been inherited or obtained a number of ways, but King no doubt could have used it to seem more ostentatious than his estate would ever show. When traveling in 1744, Alexander Hamilton and the Reverend John Milne stopped by a “log cottage” to obtain water and milk, and the minister found the presence of pewter spoons and a teapot in the house “superfluous” and “unnecessary” claiming that the poor people should not have an inclination for finery (Rozbicki 1998:134). Objects of high taste encroached on the field of legitimacy set aside for the genteel. Another interesting piece of data within the probates is the fact that nearly forty
percent of all estates within the county owned at least one slave. So, though Surry
County for the majority would be considered a poor county, close to half its residents had
the luxury of enforced labor.

Amenities found within Surry probates were recorded and echo the fact that the
majority of the county could not afford items of luxury in great numbers, though these
sought after material goods appear in all wealth levels. Only two percent of the estates
possessed a carriage, six percent owned clocks and curtains, thirty-two percent listed
books, forty percent owned looking glasses, while only fifteen percent listed items for tea
drinking though the latter two luxuries had become common by 1755 (Bushman 1992:28).
Eleven percent of the probates contained items of leisure time such as musical
instruments, cards, or backgammon tables. So, though it can be guessed that others
within Surry County at various wealth levels all attempted some form of cultural aping of
the British gentry, Edwards and a select few others had the wealth, prestige, and power to
better attain this cultural legitimacy in lieu of their material advantage over those around
them in Surry.

Reconstructing a Life Through a Material Culture Inventory

Taking the probate inventory of William Edwards VI, matching it with the
archaeological record, and conjecturing what his daily life may have been like based on
his material possessions is a possible way to study the mindset of the rural elite. Just
looking at the names listed in the probate of his twenty-six slaves and various animals,
one can construe the superior attitude that must have permeated the air around Chestnut
Farms during the time of William VI. Following in the tradition of the gentry and his
uncle before him, William VI chose historical names for some of his slaves such as Titus, Nero, and Pompey. This was a way for masters to mock the enslaved by naming them like pets. Meanwhile, his horse is listed in the probate under the name Nabob, meaning “any very wealthy, powerful person”. Giving his horse such a wealth-flaunting name hints at how William VI might have perceived himself and his own lofty perch in society.

The chariot listed in William’s inventory was of greater value than eight of his slaves, and only a few pounds less than six more. Also listed is a single riding chair. Archaeological recovery of the elaborate harness brass suggests evidence of the chariot’s grand appearance. Both of these vehicles, though especially the chariot, would have allowed Edwards to appear as the well-dressed gentleman in his fancy riding carriage as he rode through town or along the countryside. Despite the actual monetary situation of Edwards’ estate, he could have maintained an appearance, and therefore a sort of control, over his financial and social situation by being seen in such luxury transportations (Breen 1985:172). Neither William Edwards VI nor his uncle before him appear to have been in debt at the times of their deaths, though many colonial planters of the time were. Their own addiction to items of luxury had put most of them in debt to British merchants, and in 1769 leading Virginians suggested a boycott of these items normally purchased from England. Elaborate carriages were one of the major items selected in the nonimportation agreement, which hints that gentlemen of the day were becoming addicted to owning such riding carriages to assist in flaunting their social and financial stations (Holton 1999:77-78). William Edwards V may have purchased his chariot in the years before this nonimportation agreement - though evidence shows that this boycott did not affect any spending patterns of the colonial elite – and it may be the same chariot listed in his will
and given to his nephew William VI. Given the proper environment, house, furnishing, servants, and coach, a gentleman could still possess the ability to assert social power. If one had time for leisure, traveling, playing, and entertaining, the less time it seemed one needed to have time for work. The Edwards family may have welcomed the Non-Importation Act of 1770 because it allowed them to cut back their expenses without damaging their social prestige (Martin 1993:121).

Dining was another avenue for the gentleman to showcase his manners and status. Tying into Shackel’s point that these items of segmentation and control over the dining environment played their part in allowing the gentleman to showcase his control to guests and family members, the items in Edwards’ probate suggest he was guilty of the same behavior. With the increasing social importance of gentry behavior came the need for newly acquired props to allow that behavior to be showcased. Elaborate dining became another way to establish this cultural leadership and consolidate their political and economic power (Martin 1994:171). The mention in the inventory of seventy-five various China dishes, bowls, tea cups, coffee pots, and salad dishes, represents the gentry’s anxiously sought after porcelain mania during the eighteenth century (Martin 1994:173). Porcelain was not uncommon in urban environments even among the artisan ranks, but porcelain on rural sites suggests a higher household social rank, or at least pretension, than those on urban sites (Martin 1994:183). By mid-century only a small percentage of the population were dining on imported porcelains (Bushman 1992:78). Porcelain and tea drinking in general did become accessible to all classes by the early 1770s, and the elite further separated themselves by choosing more elaborate silver and china tea sets. High-end porcelain and elaborate “King’s pattern” teacups were found in
The excavation of feature 1 and identified as highly crafted wares (Pittman 2003, pers. comm.). The majority of ceramics excavated within feature 1 were high status porcelain with similar patterns suggesting sets. Edwards possibly used this ware and the behavior of tea drinking rituals and select tea times as an attempt to distance himself from the common sort (Martin 1994:172).

The chairs and tables used in the dining process were also valuable to the gentleman in his efforts to flaunt his new gentry behavior and legitimize his cultural superiority. Some 66 chairs and 10 tables are listed in Edwards’ probate inventory, most of which are mahogany or black walnut. Some rural probate studies showed that a third of inventories in the 1750s listed no tables, and chairs were nearly as uncommon (Bushman 1992:74). However, this pattern changed as both tables and chairs became common in settled areas at the end of the eighteenth century. Mahogany furniture appears to be the wood of choice among York county consumers, as they dealt specifically with London merchants and were in an excellent position to acquire fashionable English imports fancied in Williamsburg and Yorktown (Carr and Walsh 1994:103). In contrast to this evidence, mostly pine furniture was listed in inventories of backwater Somerset County, Maryland; where there were no style-setting towns and most planters sold their low-grade tobacco directly to county merchants, who later dealt with the English (Carr and Walsh 1994:104). Windsor chairs are some of the only non-mahogany or black walnut chairs listed in the probate. These chairs were cheap and made of green wood usually, though one year before Edwards decease George Washington ordered two dozen Windsor chairs for Mount Vernon, revealing their obvious appeal to the gentry class (Tunis 1965:91). The chairs and tables present in
Edwards’ probate suggest an elegant appearance was made at social dinners and guests would have been treated to the best accommodations in what was apparently a rather large manor house.

William Edwards’ probate is unique in that it lists his library books individually. We can assume that when his days visit to the tobacco fields was over, or he had given instructions to the overseer, completed plans for a new orchard, or outbuilding, or enjoyed an outing on the river in his canoe or small boat listed in this probate, he may have returned to his library to unlock one of the bookcases and select a volume, losing himself in the pages. The planter’s joy was his library (Wertenbaker 1942:112). One such book in Edwards’ library was *Clarissa Harlow* by Samuel Richardson, a book published in 1747 and still in print today. *Clarissa Harlow* is listed in the Edwards’ inventory as eight volumes valued at £1.1. The character of Clarissa drew knowledge from the time period that shows the consequences of breaking the social code (Goodwin 1999:9). Edwards himself may have been trying to manipulate this same code.

Richardson earned great personal acclaim during his career and garnered a coterie of admirers who discussed the moral philosophy apparent in his works. Writers like Richardson and papers like *The Spectator* became sources of information and opinion in coffeehouses and homes. Discussion of polite behavior in the *Spectator* and the *Tatler* could be demonstrated in polite gatherings such as tea, or group making or for allegiance building (Goodwin 1999:156). Edwards possesses eight volumes of the *Spectator* and surely garnered from the pages of the paper the proper way to act the gentleman. The editors of the *Spectator* formed their own genteel club and were highly elitist on who they selected, though considered themselves flexible enough to allow select merchants to
join (Rozbicki 1998:39). Readers of both the Spectator and the Tatler were a high society public and many essays were aimed at excluding people from certain social circles who were not considered respectable (Rozbicki 1998:57). Richard Steele, editor of the Spectator, ridiculed the style of false gentlemen by referring to them as “Pretenders of Mirth” and warned of keeping company with such fellows. His essays carried much weight with the colonial gentry (Rozbicki 1998:138). Edwards eight volume History of England by Hume was the most expensive of his library books at £4.16, equally nearly a week’s wages for a common worker of the time (Martin 1994:181). Having books was a sign of having the time to read those books, and leisure times were an enjoyment of the elite. Peyton Randolph’s estate lists a library of books valued at £250. Daniel Defoe in his work The Complete English Gentlemen has one of his characters state that a gentleman “should not be without it” in reference to his library, for it “tis a handsome ornament” (Rozbicki 1998:167).

Other items of leisure time were present in William Edwards estate inventory. In addition to his library Edwards possessed a backgammon table, a sailboat, and a spy glass, all items of luxury and ease to while away his time between running the plantation. A sturgeon line and harpoon suggests sport fishing though he could have had the slaves perform such tasks, as well as tend to the three bee hives listed which may have been a menial chore or an interesting side hobby of the property owner. Edwards owned a sword and a pair of pistols, perhaps to go along with his title of Captain. It was common for gentleman sheriffs or debt collectors to carry one or more pistols (Holton 1999:60), and since Edwards helped perform both these duties their presence in the probate makes sense. However, also to note is that Edwards was a Captain in the Surry County Militia.
and military titles quickly became ornaments of honor and functioned not only during periodic musters – which allowed the gentleman to show the desirable order of superiority in society – but in the dealings of everyday life. Officer’s titles were still a sought after source of status, if not much actual authority. Traveling Englishmen often ridiculed the American gentlemen’s assumptions of honor and noted that everywhere they went they ran into a slew of Colonels, Majors, and Captains. One traveler noted that the whole of the country must be a “retreat of heroes” (Rozbicki 1998:156). Still these comments did not dissuade the colonial gentry, for whom titles become preciously usable as marks of distinction.

Material goods associated with artificial lighting are present in Edwards’ probate inventory and are a sign of wealth and status because of the attempt to gain control over the night, and the suggestion that one had things to do after dark, or servants to keep the candles burning (Crowley 2001:117). Possessing candlesticks indicated that a family could entertain after dark, whether or not they ever did. Edwards’ estate lists five candlesticks and pairs of snuffers, as well as two-dozen candle molds showing that candles were being manufactured on the property, probably by the slave women. Ownership of candlesticks was not a function of wealth but one of desire, as the items were not that expensive. Artificial illumination was an optional rather than a crucial part of people’s daily lives. Another form of artificial lighting was the looking glass owned by William Edwards. Looking glasses gave a person a self-evident claim to gentility. Colonial American ownership of looking glasses illustrates their extensive demand and ready availability. The average value of a looking glass was only five shillings though two-thirds of the looking glasses were owned by the wealthiest households in a
Connecticut study (Crowley 2001:129). The largest of the looking glasses could cost between £2-5 and were often placed in carved or gilded frames. Edwards’ looking glass is listed at twenty shillings, which is way above the average, but below the more elaborate ones available. A comparison of artificial illumination between the homes of Landon Carter of Sabine Hall and his nephew, Robert Carter II of Nomini Hall, shows how, even among the wealthiest Virginia elite, there was a difference between urban and rural uses of household lighting (Crowley 2001:138). Landon Carter’s life as a farmer had little use for staying up after dark, but that was apparently not the case for William Edwards whose probate gives us clues into his nocturnal activities.

Another item of interest in Edwards probate was a Morocco pocket book. The item is listed next to his backgammon table and suggests it was a leisurely possession, and evidence exists to show that George Washington ordered special from London a pair of Morocco leather slippers (McCullough 2005:46). The Morocco leather was apparently a well sought after fashion of the day.

By reading the probate inventory of William Edwards VI and conjecturing some parts of his daily life it is possible to get a better understanding of the rural gentleman. Edwards income, like that of most colonial planters, was linked to his success in the tobacco industry, though he was able to supplement that with his gentry appointed positions in the community and his inherited wealth. The tobacco economy experience several booms and busts forcing some colonial planters to diversify their income in various ways such as experimentation with other crops, or manufacturing of usable goods to sell or trade in town. The planters’ attempts at other forms of income begin to show up in probate inventories in the eighteenth century (Carr 1988:376). Edwards’ listings of
four spinning wheels, flax wheels, looms and sleys, all suggest the actions of weaving yarn, spinning linen, preparing flax, or spinning wool. He also had numerous sheep listed in his inventory, as well as twenty-seven bales of spun cotton, picked cotton, seeded cotton, wool, and flax. His probate also lists weights and scales for cotton. Fifty bushels of Indian corn, and peas were listed and possibly sold. A still and tub, apple mill, and sixteen barrels of brandy equaling 480 gallons and valued at £144, were also listed within the probate and hint at considerable time spent in orchard products, some of which were probably sold. Drinking had few corrupt characteristics for the colonial gentry. It played an undeniably positive role as a lubricant at polite society’s congregations and as one of the few attractions of living on the cultural periphery. Planters drank regularly on election days, muster calls, court sessions, in taverns, and in private drinking clubs established for gentlemen. Imbibing was not criticized, as many believed that alcohol brought medical benefits as well as a relaxing diversion (Rozbicki 1998:86-87). So, Edwards may have benefited socially with drink, as well as financially with the selling of brandy from his estate.

Diversification bolstered the economy, making it less dependant on fluctuations in the tobacco trade (Carr 1988:381). This growing number of home industries allowed for the production of wool, flax, and candles and lowered the price of necessities, enabling the planters to purchase amenities (Shackel 1993:90). The economic diversification hinted at in Edwards’ probate might have contributed to his ability to gather amenities and further his attempt at maintaining control over his social environment.
Cultural Legitimacy in Surry County

The gentry of the late eighteenth century used material goods to stimulate a hegemonic control over their environments in an attempt to legitimize their culture, but was there a difference in this action between those living in towns such as Williamsburg, and those living in more rural areas such as Surry County? One could argue that accessibility and affordability may have differed, but was not the motivation to own such goods the same amongst urban and rural elites? Can an example of a member of the gentry be found in remote Surry County – such as the Edwards family- whose acquisition of material goods matches that of any well-known elite of the time period in various cities such as Williamsburg or Yorktown? Such information would be useful in showing that Surry County, though considered a backwater by many today, was once inhabited by the same kind of spirited, revolutionary gentlemen elite that birthed our nation across the James River in Williamsburg.

During the consumer revolution of the late eighteenth century, gentlemen acquired social rankings based on their material possessions and mannerly actions. In Virginia, Williamsburg was the social, cultural, and political capital of the state. Our nation’s history is filled with famous names that passed through doors in the colonial capital and mingled with those of others stations, preaching equality, while accumulating the lavish trappings that set them apart. Meanwhile, across the James River in rural Surry County, this same mindset must have been suppressed by more than just distance from Williamsburg. The rural citizens of Surry County seemingly had no need to flaunt an elegant lifestyle as life depended on crops and plantations more than town life and acquaintances. Urban life and culture focused on display, and on the concentration of
leisure and other opportunities for people to meet each other. It would be easy to assume that town living encouraged a level of conspicuous consumption never matched in the countryside, and that it took some time before the decadent lifestyles of those town dwellers competing to keep up with the Joneses spilled over into the rural areas, affecting those with income and the means to accumulate material wealth. This way of thinking rests on the obvious assumption that those in town environments enjoyed better access to material goods while acquiring a taste for fineries that was sooner and better sated within their urban surroundings. Towns were, after all, important centers of distribution, which undoubtedly influenced the patterns of ownership of certain goods made available in shops. This study presents evidence that Surry County enjoyed its own members of the elite class who patterned themselves after the same British forebears that their urban neighbors emulated. As the American colonial planters desired to imitate the gentry of England, they in turn developed their own uniquely American style of genteelism and became instead the arbiters of what was considered mannerly within the colonies. Once these urban elite became the arbiters of fashion and taste they began to distance themselves from and judge others around them, notably the rural elite who were trying just as they were to emulate the English gentry. The rural elite in turn could force these same judgments upon the poorer people around them in the countryside in a continuing form of snobbery. At the heart of this genteelism was material culture. New items of elitism complimented with the proper use and manners surrounding the objects were used to maintain a hegemonic and segmented control over the surroundings of those fortunate enough to possess them. This was happening in both the urban and rural environments.
Urban and Rural Material Culture Differences

Local towns were too thinly populated and had too few mercantile connections with any commercial area to be a main source of metropolitan influence (Carr and Walsh 1988:139). For example, the town of Cobham in Surry was a failed experiment in town establishment that never fully developed and influenced few of the inhabitants of Surry County into changing their material ways. Urban influences did exist in the Chesapeake and did affect behavioral patterns, but they most assuredly stemmed from English influences and not local ones. For example, in cities such as Williamsburg, the direct influence of English designs on locally produced furniture became pronounced in the late eighteenth century (Sweeney 1994:28). American cities adopted culture from London as quickly as they possibly could. Not just dress or style but the lifestyle of metropolitan England was soon plagiarized, as town inhabitants could go to concerts, plays, or balls, frequent reading libraries or meet in clubs, and take part in the large gamut of urban culture and recreations (Martin 1993:107). London was the model to which Chesapeake gentry could and did aspire, and they, in turn, provided models for smaller planters. Material goods were crucial in this aspiration and allowed the gentry to judge and arbitrate those without possession of these goods.

It may seem suitable to enquire whether living in a town could have contributed to a greater inclination toward possession of household goods. Was there something particular about living in towns that led people to develop a slightly different material culture within their households? Some of the goods associated with an interest in the ambience of the domestic atmosphere, especially pictures, looking glasses, or window
curtains, were certainly more common in towns. Overlooked in viewing accessibility, as the primary factor in determining purchases is the desirability to own such items within the mind of the obtainer. Material goods, then as now, are indicative of behavior and attitudes. They have symbolic importance along with physical attributes and practical or impractical uses. Personal and household behavior influenced material life. This notion transcends living conditions and instead highlights the similarities between the elite in town and country. Did not the aspiration to obtain a level of consumption on par with the English gentry invoke the same desires and social-ladder-climbing intentions of those who tried to emulate them, no matter whether they dwelled in an urban or rural landscape? The significance of this study will be to show that while the availability of luxurious goods, and arguably their affordability, may have been skewed towards the town dwellers of nearby Williamsburg and Yorktown, the desire to own these items was a common denominator shared by those in remote Surry County.

In Paul Shackel’s (1993) study consumption patterns from probate inventory data of the urban and rural contexts reveal different acquisition rates between the two areas. Items that Shackel relates to discipline played a larger role among the urban elite than among the rural elite. This is not to refute that the rural elite were not involved in creating a power over the rural poor. Rather, the early rural elite used different approaches to gain control over their subordinates, such as legislation concerning slave’s rights, and indentured servitude. The rural elite’s explicit use of material goods to demonstrate their authority over the poor became more rampant in the mid-eighteenth century (Shackel 1993:167). By the late eighteenth century the Edwards family were in
possession of most of the amenities listed in Shackel’s research and were probably using them to maintain this power over their rural neighbors.

Seven percent of Americans lived in urban cities, so the pursuit of cultural legitimacy should have been less a case of residing in large urban areas than upholding elite culture in whatever one’s setting. To counter the urban advantage and accessibility to new styles and fashions, the rural elite could create events to unite town dwellers and wealthy rural gentry spread around the countryside. Great balls could be hosted in rural areas at a gentleman’s house. Among these islands of refinement, the great Virginia gentry were able to sustain a sense of belonging to metropolitan life, amidst what they saw as the unsophisticated manners and habits of their common neighbors. The prosperous rural gentry could have keenly worked to maintain civilization in isolated areas in other ways. They might acquire and continue strong ties to England through correspondence. The archaeological discovery of a British nobleman’s wine bottle seal may suggest that Edwards had some connection to an English Baron and used this family clout to further his social standing. The rural gentry could also create their own restricted social world of polite circles by visiting and dining. The material culture associated with this ritual would enhance the prestige of the host. Rural gentry, as with their urban counterparts, could place a high premium on education, classical learning and cultivated manners. That these Chesapeake gentlemen worked so hard to attain this cultural legitimacy presents strong evidence of its crucial role in maintaining power relations and social control (Martin 1994:108).
Showing Status with Material Culture

Material culture is more than a demonstration of wealth. It is also a means that may create, organize, and reshape social relations. Changes in social structures and power relations are often strengthened by new symbols in the form of everyday material goods. With a strong and undeniable pecking order, symbolic change seldom occurs and material goods uphold a character that reflects that hierarchical association in the community. When the social order is in jeopardy, new goods are set up in an attempt to reestablish social differentiation. When poor and middling estates began to acquire material items considered genteel, the gentry began to seek better examples and compliment them with actions and rituals unknown to the lower sorts. The wealthy in the Chesapeake used material symbols that reinforced the established order. The new material goods associated with new genteel manners and behaviors enforced the hegemonic control the colonial planters enjoyed, and supported their claims of cultural legitimacy to their associates in England and among themselves (Shackel 1994:93).

With an interdisciplinary approach to this analysis using consumption studies, history, and archaeological perspectives, a powerful tool for interpreting the past emerges. In this study, historical evidence concerning the county and the Edwards family, extant documents of the households, and outside sources on the time period are combined with archaeological excavations and material culture studies. When these data are collected and placed within a social context, the dynamic meanings of the material goods become clearer, as does any change in their meanings due to social power struggles. The archaeological evidence needs to go beyond descriptive and functional analyses of the material goods recovered and seek to understand how the goods
structured everyday existence. The analysis of stylistic attributes and assemblage variability are essential in discovering emic meaning. Material culture plays an important role in daily social relations. Groups manipulate and negotiate meanings for material culture according to their strategies of survival and legitimacy (Shackel 1993:11). Material culture and ritual become important in power relations as they reinforce the stability through personal experiences of cultural form. Using the archaeological evidence, the probate inventories, family history, and consumerism studies all assist in demonstrating the meanings of material goods in the late eighteenth-century Chesapeake. Studies that explore the symbolic and the active nature in material culture rarely integrate archaeology, history, and theory. Many social scientists neglect to analyze goods in the cultural contexts in which they operate (Shackel 1993:18). Individuals and groups in the Chesapeake keenly used material goods to define power relations and form social hierarchies. This archaeological and historical case study provides a basis and context for an understanding of the meaning and uses of goods within this struggle for cultural legitimacy recognition amongst the urban and rural elites of the late eighteenth century Chesapeake.

The Values of Material Objects

The process of conveying value and meaning is not random. People are historical products and see the world through their culture; the meanings and values they assign to reality involve their early experiences. In the case of the colonial planters, these meanings were set in England by the elite classes there, and copied and altered to suit the American cultural landscape (Rozbicki 1998:20). William Edwards’ elaborate coach
ornament may represent a family crest or seal whose cultural meaning extends back centuries in England. While keeping that meaning intact, he may also have used the coach and its decorations to enhance his prestige to those who viewed his rides through the countryside. Coaches and sets of silver may have been engraved and decorated with the family crest, their legitimizing value enhanced by this symbol of pedigree (Rozbicki 1998:132). Most consumer goods do not have inherent values but are assigned them by their users or witnesses. The user can actively influence the meaning of artifacts in the service of personal or class identify. This is only profitable if others acknowledge and accept the statement being made legitimizing the cultural intent (Goodwin 1999:104).

Objects of taste, no longer authorized by culture, were themselves indicative of the quality of persons appropriating them. Controlling these objects suggested superiority over those who remain tied to the common necessities. But the mere possession of such things needed to go hand in hand with the proper actions and rituals of use. Wealth alone was not an adequate gauge of the legitimizing process (Rozbicki 1998:128). Individual decisions about the allotment of wealth mirror culturally defined goals and the strategies employed to attain such goals. The ways people use or do not use their collected wealth tell us a great deal about how they conceive of themselves as families, households, and individuals (Gibb 1996:v-ix). Both the urban and the rural elite’s quest for gentility through material culture, despite all the hindrances of provincialism, appears to be the most directly successful legitimizing tool for achieving their goals. One major reason why silver tableware, or a family crest on a carriage door bore such power was that cultural history is innately personal; we inhabit positions that in themselves are not distinguishable from our immersion in them. Gentility does not exist
as a separate, objective, and somehow isolated realm of life, although it may seem so upon consideration. Instead, they are all essential parts of the multifaceted daily current of human understanding. Life takes place in everyday situations, and only when we take a broader view can we appreciate the power of those small rituals and objects to create meaning. It lies not in their capability simply to assert a social order but in the considerable degree to which they actually constitute such an order. The colonial success of genteel stylization could indeed be used as evidence to show that prestige status is culturally defined by the consumption of goods as symbolized by exclusive styles of life (Rozbicki 1998:170).

The Appearance of Wealth

In the early eighteenth century the rise of the southern planter gentry to distinction meant that they had attained so much control of power and wealth in comparison to the rest of the colonists that membership in this legitimate cultural group now required precise life opportunities such as the supply of goods, living conditions, and the character and manners to go along with them. The group’s swift emergence created extreme changes in their lifestyles. The growth of slavery resulted in a rise in leisure time for the planter class; consumption rose high enough above subsistence levels to become representative of a higher class lifestyle; and work now implied a clearly distinctive administrative character, well distanced from that of the small and medium planters (Rozbicki 1998:38). This process extended from about 1720 to 1770, and by then the elite had emerged as an objective social and economic group, but still needed to be legitimized as gentry by acquiring the appropriate material and cultural capital. This was
why the quest for cultural legitimacy became so critical at this stage. A further push to distance themselves from those subordinates begat a consumer revolution that saw enormous spending habits amongst the gentry leading to debt and recession.

In the early 1760s Virginia plunged into a recession (Holton 1999:60). Tobacco prices continued to be in flux and yet gentlemen persisted on spending and ordering ostentatious material goods in an effort to maintain the appearance of wealth and seek cultural legitimacy from any witnesses. Despite a recovering tobacco market in the 1770s, these colonial elite found themselves addicted to luxuries and some gentlemen were driven to early graves from the stress and humiliation of debt (Holton 1999:82). Eventually, the gentry’s search for an escape from arrears had become desperate. Frugality was painful and the thought of not continuing to order unnecessary expenditures on luxury items did not occur to most gentlemen. The reason the colonial gentlemen could not sway away from ordering more luxuries despite increasing debt was because of the vital functions these material items served in society. Material goods became essential in social terms. Spending money on oneself was one way to entertain membership in the higher class. Displays of wealth were statements of social superiority; they publicized the consumer’s rank in society. Even giving these luxury items as gifts was an expression of wealth in the eyes of the receiver and an invaluable tool in maintaining social control. To reduce consumption of British goods would be leaving unmet some of the social needs that imports from England seemed to fill. Gentlemen of the day would be humiliated to no longer be able to order and acquire these goods, and the simple act of suddenly stopping their orders would send the signal that they might now be a bad credit risk. One had to maintain the appearance of wealth (Holton 1999:83-
This maintenance of appearance began to be cast into doubt in the late 1760s when credit crises affected the very legitimacy of established symbols of stability such as the grand mansions, plantations, and handsome coaches. The great planters depended upon the perception of those around them. If a Virginia gentleman seemed wealthy, then in this materialistic culture, he could still claim high status (Breen 1985:170-171).

In the late 1760s, prominent gentlemen such as George Washington knew that the colonial planters were getting into trouble with their debt and called for and helped arrange a boycott of luxury items from England in response to the Townshend duties (Holton 1999:86). Planters would agree to give up ordering such “badges of gentility” as silver plate, clocks, looking glasses, coaches, and jewelry (Breen 1985:191). In 1769 the House of Burgesses agreed and the non-importation association was born. The results embarrassed almost everyone. Where gentlemen planters should have been denying themselves the pleasure of ordering extravagant luxuries, the results showed that the number of orders actually greatly increased in the years following the boycott (Breen 1985:194). It is not known if William Edwards VI or his uncle before him agreed with the non-importation plan, but the items listed in the boycott do appear in the probate and archaeological record of the Edwards’ plantation. The results of the failed boycott show that the mere possession of luxury items allowed the gentleman planters to maintain the appearance of wealth even if in reality they were in risk of serious financial trouble.

Wealth was not only measured in the financial dealings of the planter but in the way he carried himself and used the perception of those around him to attain cultural legitimacy and use it to his social advantage.
Context and Meaning

Some social scientists have successfully established that goods form and maintain social boundaries (Hodder 1986, Shackel 1993). Hodder’s post-processual archaeological approach accepts that material culture can act back and affect the society and behavior that produced it. However, it can only do so once meanings are ascribed and accepted by those within the society. Material culture and its connected meanings are then played out as part of social strategies, as the colonial gentlemen used material goods to create new roles, reinforce existing ones, and deny the existence of others (Hodder 1986:8). The colonial planters of the late eighteenth century and their uses of material goods to manipulate their subordinates reinforce Hodder’s argument. The relationship between behavior and material culture depends upon the actions of the individuals within the particular cultural contexts (Hodder 1986:13). Once the planters became the arbiters of their own cultural legitimacy, they decided what material goods were necessary to denote mannerly and gentlemanly status upon others and used those meanings to structure the social hierarchy.

The social context and the meaning of goods are crucial components in understanding the dynamic characteristics of consumption patterns. Material culture does more than mirror behavior or serve as an indicator of wealth. Goods give meaning to social behavior as they enforce, reinforce, and construct behavior (Shackel 1993:91). Because goods have an ideological and symbolic aspect, they may be keenly controlled in social situations. They will have different meanings in different circumstances. Objects can confirm and reaffirm social boundaries as long as those in control of the meaning acknowledge the codes. The material goods discovered during archaeological
excavations at Chestnut Farms, and those present in the Edwards’ family probate inventories, supply us with the possibility that William Edwards could very well have played a role in this social pageant of the late eighteenth-century southern planter gentlemen and their quest for cultural legitimacy and control of their social environments.
Chapter 6:  

Conclusion- The Edwards in their Material World

The Edwards family of Chestnut Farms enjoyed the opulent lifestyles of southern gentlemen planters along the banks of the James River, in Surry County, during the eighteenth century. William Edwards V and VI both lived during the latter half of the century during a time when a “consumer revolution” was taking place. The subsequent use of these material goods, acquired during this time, for social manipulation has been discussed, and the probability that the Edwards family used their possessions to acquire status and exhort hegemonic control over their subordinates exists. In this section the “constraints of consumerism” will be explored: availability, affordability, and desirability (Martin 1993:9). This is not an attempt to study consumerism but to study the consumers. It is helpful to ask how an item was available to the buyer, how it was affordable, and most importantly why the object was desirable. This section will deal specifically with the possible answers to the questions of availability, affordability, and desirability as they applied to the Edwards family in remote Surry County.

Availability of Material Goods

Concerns about gentility and health created a scientific and technological advancement on domestic comfort items for the underprivileged. This humanitarian effort gave significance to a consumer revolution in Anglo-American society, as more people had more money to spend on additional goods. Fashion increased demand. The propertied laypeople started to buy goods formerly thought to be the restricted property
of the affluent. Therefore, the wealthy began to obtain even more luxurious and extravagant items to distance themselves. People referred to their new consumers inclinations as “conveniences” and “decencies.” Matching chairs and tables of carved walnut or mahogany provided specific furniture for social dining. Drinks such as tea, coffee, and chocolate required particular vessels of glass and ceramic for preparation and serving. Looking glasses and clocks provided luxurious exhibits of technology (Crowley 2001:143). Domestic leisure actives increased as a result of increasing items of luxury in the households. The roots of gentility, the quest for style and comfort, the economic and technological changes that support them, and the social emulation and competition that motivate them, all played a role in spreading the culture of gentility. At the beginning of these pursuits were innovative marketing techniques that influenced drives for social imitation and competition. The new availability of new kinds of goods, a distribution system that allowed these goods to contact new markets, and discoveries of how to advertise and exhibit them in ways that interested buyers, all combined to support this desire to emulate fashionable cultures in England. Combining this new availability with the desire for cultural legitimacy in America allowed luxury to rise as a social criterion for status (Carr and Walsh 1988:142).

This rise of the retail trade fits into the study of the Edwards family as consumers. More people than ever before had the capability to see, touch, own and get familiar with these objects. Improvements made in transportation, marketing, and technology facilitated an increase in amenities (Shackel 1993:89). The rise of the retail industry that placed an actual emporium in their towns or villages which gave people frequent information about material objects, and placed a merchant behind the counter to persuade
them to buy. It was the new availability (Martin 1993:157). Consumer goods were
distributed in multiple ways during the eighteenth century, such as at public markets and
fairs, and by peddlers, all leading to the rise of fixed place retail shops (Martin 1993:159).
The first retail trade was a sort of water borne peddling where merchants traveled to
private landings to buy tobacco and sell goods. Small commercial centers eventually
developed on plantations where neighboring planters could bring crops and purchase
goods (Martin 1993:179).

William Edwards V worked as tobacco inspector on Gray’s Creek at one of these
warehouse commercial centers and would have been directly involved in the consignment
trade. William Edwards VI was an established gentleman planter and also would have
had access to this water borne trade, as smaller planters in Surry sold their crops to him
and he in turn consigned his directly to the British merchants (Holton 1999:xviii). With
the help of the Royal Navy, the British merchants were practically dominating the
tobacco trade prior to the Revolution (Holton 1999:60). The British merchants would
actually supply the planter elite with subscriptions to catalogs such as Georgian pattern
books for architecture (Johnson 1996:153), and Country Magazine depicting the latest
styles (Breen 1985:129). In a very short time goods depicted in these magazines began to
appear in the elite Chesapeake households. Gentleman planters such as the Edwards had
a unique direct contact with British merchants, and only large growers who sent their
tobacco to England on consignment could order manufactured goods through London and
procure the nonessential luxury items they used to flaunt social status. Even they had to
wait nearly a year for these orders to arrive though. By the 1760s there were two annual
shipments, spring and summer goods arriving first in February or March, and a second
shipment of all winter goods came in late summer of early fall (Carr and Walsh 1994:106-107). This cut the gentleman’s waiting time in half. Previously there had been a lag time between the appearance of new goods and their modes of behavior in England and the adoption in the colonies, but now that time was starting to shrink (Carr and Walsh 1994:59). So, the Edwards had direct access to this merchant trade and probably used it to their advantage, though the merchant trade was not always satisfactory.

Planters like the Edwards may have directed merchants to disburse money but also to make specific purchases, sending long lists and detailed instructions on what to obtain. Plantation supplies were frequently ordered, but also items for the planter’s personal use such as furniture, carriages, books, clocks, and clothing. These luxury items became the badges of gentility for the planter class, and the merchants allowed the planters to project the next season’s crops and order in advance making some planters spend more than they could afford in a given year. Even though some planters found themselves deeply in debt the British merchants would continue to extend them consignment credit to ensure they business, and mounting debts would often pass from father to son (Middleton 1984:117). No evidence suggests either Edwards man fell victim to this overspending, though the items of luxury are present in the probate and archaeological evidence indicating the men took advantage of the merchant trade.

The British merchant trade was not the only avenue available to the Edwards men in obtaining luxury items and new consumer goods. Less than a shilling would get a man and his horse across the ferry to Jamestown, and Williamsburg was just a short ride away (Boddie 1948:157). James Getty’s blacksmith shop, fine silversmiths, and expert furniture makers all resided in Williamsburg and provided gentlemen such as the
Edwards with the ability to attain luxury items without waiting for the British ships to arrive in port. For example, in 1774, Robert Carter of Nomini Hall ordered sixteen mahogany chairs with black leather from Benjamin Bucktrout of Williamsburg, who came from London and claimed to make furniture both plain and ornamental. The affluent Carter obviously respected Bucktrout’s work, indicating that the furniture makers of Virginia’s capital were good enough for genteel tastes (Wertenbaker 1942:118). The Edwards family mahogany furniture may have came from this same readily available source.

George Washington, like other great planters of the Chesapeake, embraced a life very much like an English gentlemen. He possessed a beautiful green coach with brass fittings and leather lining that had been custom built for him in England to his stipulations. He ordered his clothes from England, and only the finest English wools and linens and latest tastes would suffice. He wore English boots, English shoes, and Morocco leather slippers, all made to order for him in London. Many of his books were published in London. The very glass in his windows through which he observed his world was imported English glass (McCullough 2005:46). Using this example of perhaps the most well known of Virginia gentleman makes for an easy comparison to the very same items present in the Edwards’ estate, even the same Morocco leather. Ordering goods from England, obtaining them through craftsmen in Williamsburg, and selecting them from shops along the streets of the capital city were ways in which Edwards, like Washington and other gentlemen planters of the day, could acquire these new consumer items of luxury and comfort.
Affordability of Material Goods

In this section affordability will be revealed to mean more than how the Edwards family dealt with the monetary expenses of material goods. Previous sections have provided information on various occupational incomes enjoyed by the Edwards family, positions that may have been gained from their previous wealth and family prestige. The Edwards men may have been given a status of gentlemen just by family connections and position in the community rather than any real economic standing (Weatherill 1988:170). Kinship networks in Virginia fortified by the replacement of primogeniture by divisible inheritance, contributed immensely to the homogeneity of the elite as children of the gentry married within the group and as family ties were used to fill offices, improve fortunes, and exercise political pressure. A very few select family names in Virginia dominated the positions of Justice of the Peace, and councilors (Rozbicki 1998:35). In addition to this esteem, the profits received from the tobacco trade, their incomes as inspectors and various other councils and trades, and economic diversification, also afforded these men the ability to pay for goods. Clues to diversification of income within the probate inventory have also previously been discussed. Diversification strengthened the economy, making the family less dependant upon the tobacco industry. Home industries carried on by the Edwards family – their wives or slaves included – would add small amounts of additional income to local exchange encouraging expenditure on amenities (Carr 1988:381). With crop diversification and home industry producing more income to spend on fineries, English production increased and manufacturing was more large scale, which led to a reduction in prices (Shackel 1993:89). New technologies increased the ability of manufacturers to produce large quantities of goods in fairly
regular consignments. This contribution of an assortment of small innovations in production was essential to the growth process (Martin 1993:94). So, with dropping prices and rising incomes due to diversification and family status, the Edwards men could partake in the gentry style of life with ease.

Credit was another avenue southern colonial planters could use to purchase material goods. Cash was in short supply in Virginia and the British merchants extended a virtually unlimited credit system to the gentry. This credit extension caused the merchants to charge a small amount more for the purchased goods, and along with hidden interest charges, manufactured goods were more expensive in Southern ports (Holton 1999:63). Debts accrued by colonial planters have been discussed and no evidence exists to suggest the Edwards family were victims of this overspending problem.

So as factors, lifestyles, and technological advances made obtaining material goods easier and more affordable, the middling classes began to find enough extra income on hand to partake in the luxury item-purchasing craze. As more and more people could afford the dues of membership into elite culture, the elite upped the price of association with more extravagant spending, dress, style, and culture.

Desirability of Material Goods

The desirability of material goods gave birth to the rise of metropolitan culture and set the standards of gentility. To be a country gentleman one was obliged to keep horses, hounds, carriages, a suitable number of servants, and maintain an elegant table for the entertainment of his neighbors (McCullough 2005:47). Southern planter gentleman desired to live this genteel lifestyle and soon realized that it required visible
accompaniments and cultural manners. From London came the new fashions, styles, and the cultured taste. From all over England came the majority of the manufactured goods that formed the focal point of the new consumerism. But the largest and most pertinent question concerns changing desires—what made people who were happy with the old and serviceable suddenly want the new and fashionable (Martin 1993:92)? New manners of social behavior and demands of urban life entwined to create a unique urban style of life and a new catalog of eighteenth-century material goods. An emphasis on fashion and elite sociability resulted in a desire to experience this lifestyle (Martin 1993:106).

The idea of desirability had multiple components. How artifacts functioned in ritualized behavior, differentiation of social rank, recognition of cultural legitimacy, formation of social groups, and how meaning was bestowed and changed were a few of the reasons for the desire to own new material goods. These examples went beyond the emotional pleasure-seeking aspects of the desire of new goods (Martin 1993b: 156). By the late eighteenth century there existed a leisure hierarchy with cultural attributes that set them apart from the laboring classes below them. Qualities that distinguished and differentiated them were embodied in a code of conduct recognized as legitimately genteel by the new arbiters of taste in America (Carson 2003:352). Colonial planters desired to live well no matter what the cost, and their rising expenditures were a direct result of their quest for cultural legitimacy (Breen 1985:130).

Benefits

For the colonial elite, meeting the criteria for legitimacy standard set in London seemed the only culturally viable means of succeeding in their ambitions (Rozbicki
It made sense to them that they should emulate the cultural standard set forth in England, and judge themselves and others by how close they could imitate that measure. However, the new consumerism meant far more than just impersonating one’s betters. The striving for new manners of enjoyment, the allure with the novel and exotic all were released in the new world of consumer goods. We see the continuing sense among the most elite that they were being gazed at and admired, and that the stare of the audience was its own beneficial reward (Martin 1993:118). Benefits extended beyond vanity however, as the planters were able to use their social positions in society to their advantage. By controlling the majority of the wealth, and with kinship patterns allowing them to inherit and keep most of the politically powerful positions in society, they were able to enforce a hegemonic control over their social environments, which the acquisition of material goods was simply a catalyst towards. Having shown the Edwards family to possess the material goods of luxury, to have had access to the credit system of the British merchant trade and travel access to the merchants of Williamsburg, and to have earned the lucrative positions in society to allow them to afford these goods, it is easier to project the desire behind the Edwards men to own these items of extravagance for reasons beyond simply satisfying their consumer urges. The Edwards of Surry County were able to use these material items to their benefit, as those in the urban areas of Williamsburg and Yorktown were able to use material wealth to both flaunt social station and exhort hegemonic control over their lesser neighbors.
The Desire for Cultural Legitimacy

Material culture played a large role in the southern colonial planter’s desire for recognition from the English. This desire for legitimacy was a constant struggle for the Americans. This new aspiring group of colonial planters attempting to undermine the authority of the established gentry in England shows that culture is not fixed and social and political hierarchies can be changed. Those who are able to define the legitimate culture as specifically and naturally theirs are usually those who win in the larger power relations between groups (Rozbicki 1998:25-26). In England’s refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the American planter class, and in their efforts to be recognized, the southern planter class fashioned their own unique culture. The life experience of the southern elite planter was markedly different from that of the rest of colonial society. They became the arbiters of their elite lifestyle, passing judgment on those they deemed unworthy of their standards. By the end of the eighteenth century a distinctly American nature had emerged. However, gentleman planters from Virginia, Maryland, South Carolina, Jamaica, Barbados, and St. Kitts, despite regional differences, all displayed the same desire for cultural legitimacy (Rozbicki 1998:31). The same can now be said of remote Surry County.

As the new distinct American culture and gentility emerged, it became apparent that the urban elite considered themselves the standard-bearers of refined tastes. Genteel ideals of elegance and cultivation motivated wealthy colonials to express their lifestyles in the world of material objects. The driving force behind this modification process was much more than mere emulation of cultural blueprints from Europe (Rozbicki 1998:181). To be able to gain equality with the elite of England, also enabled the southern gentry
elite to discriminate in their own societies against those who did match their cultural ideals. The Edwards family of Chestnut Farms fits the model set out in this research of an elite planter class seeking their own cultural legitimacy while at the same time seeking to distance and empower themselves over the lesser planters who viewed their ascendancy as an ideal.

By studying the characteristics of the material world that are customized by cultural behavior, clues are reached that show how manmade things fit together or interact with daily life, affecting people, social groups, and culture. In an example of how the ritual and behavior exhibited by the ruling class can justify and maintain their dominance with the consent of those over which they ruled; the Edwards family of Surry County manipulated their material world through housing, landscape, dress, and possessions as an important part of maintaining societal control.
Appendix A: Edwards Family Wills and Probates

The Will of William Edwards V

I William Edwards of the Parish of Southwark in the County of Surry + Colony of Virginia, hereby do make this my last Will + Testament in manner following to wit -------
Item. I give + devise unto my dearly beloved wife Martha the following slaves (to wit) York, Little Tom, Africa Bob, Moses, Little Africa Little York, Isaac, Kato, Sylvia, Fanny, Tabb, Cory + Annie to her + her heirs for ever. Item. I give and devise unto my nephew William Edwards when he shall arrive to the Age of Twenty one Years, the following Slaves. Charles, Simon, Ned, + Pegg +their increase to him and his heirs for ever, and also the sum of Fifty Pounds in Money to be paid him when he shall arrive to the Age aforesaid. Item. I give and devise unto my nephew William Walker the following Slave. Henry ??? to him + his heirs forever + also the sum of Ten Pounds. Item. I give and devise unto my Nephew James Walker one Negro boy named Sam to him and to his heirs forever. Item. I give + bequeath unto my Niece Elizabeth Harris the sum of Ten Pounds. Item. I give and devise unto my Nephew Micajah Edwards when he arrives to the Age of Twenty one years one Negro boy named Daniel to him and his heirs forever Item. I give and devise unto my Nephew Richard Edwards when he arrives to the Age of Twenty one years one Negro boy named Essex to him + his heirs forever. Item. I give and devise unto my Nephew Benjamin Edwards when he arrives to the Age of Twenty one years one Negro Boy Named Jack to him and his heirs forever. Item. I give and devise unto my Niece Mary Butts one Negro Girl Named Sal to her + her heirs forever. But in case Thomas Butts her Husband or the said Mary should recover of the Estate of my Brother Micajah Edwards deceased one Negro Girl Named Sarah given unto Ann Edwards his daughter or in case they or either of them recover of the said Estate the Negroes they now claim then I give the said Negro Girl Sal + her increase unto my Niece Ann Edwards when she arrives to the Age of Twenty one Years or at the Day of Marriage which shall first happen and to her heirs forever. Item. I give and devise unto my Niece Lucy Edwards when she arrives to the Age of Twenty one Years or at the Day of Marriage one Negro Girl Named Biddy + her increase to her + her heirs forever.
Item. I give + Devise unto my Niece Elizabeth Edwards when she arrives to the Age of Twenty one years or at the Day of Marriage one Negro Girl Named Beck + her increase to her and her heirs forever. Item. I give and devise unto my Niece Ann Edwards when she arrives to the age of Twenty one years or at the Day of Marriage one Negro boy named Michael to her + her heirs forever. Item. I give and devise unto my Niece Martha Edwards one Negro child named Little Ned the son of Kate. When she arrives to the age of Twenty one years or at the Day of Marriage to her + her heirs forever. Item. I give + devise unto my dearly beloved wife all my lands + the following slaves (to wit): Great Tom, Ebo, Sypker?, Oronoker? Jimmy, Davy, Tytus, Doll, Phillis, Nell, Isabell, + Sukey + all my stock of what kind recover: + the stock of all my household furniture during her natural life + after her decease, I give and devise the same unto my Nephew William Edwards to him and his heirs forever. All the rest+ residue of my estate I give and devise unto my dearly beloved Wife and her heirs forever. It is my will and desire that my estate should be not inventoried nor appraised + to appoint my dearly beloved wife + my friend Nicholas Faulcon Junior Executors of this my last Will + Testament. In Witness + Whereof I have hereunto set my hand + seal this 9th day of June in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred + 71. Signed, sealed, published, and delivered by the said W. Edwards as + for his Last Will + Testament in presence of us: W Edwards (L.S.)


At a court held for Surry County November the 19th 1771---The afore written last Will + Testament of William Edwards deceased was presented in Court by Martha Edwards + Nicholas Faulcon Jr. the per: herein named who made oath thereto according to Law + the same being bound by the Oaths of Willia Hay, James Sterling + William Ward these of the witnesses thereto was by the Court ordered to be rec. For the motion of the said executors, Certificate is granted them for obtaining a Probate thereof in due form.---

Examined William Nelson CS Cour----
The Will of William Edwards VI

In the name of God amen I William Edwards of Surry County and Parish of Southwark do make and ordain this my last Will and Testament in manner Following vizt.

Item. I give unto my loving Wife Susannah the use of all my Lands in Surry and Southampton, also the use of all my Negroes and their increase, stocks of all kinds, household and kitchen furniture and Crops that are growing after all my just debts are paid, and the profits arising from Crops + after educating and maintaining all my Children, also the one my Wife being now pregnant with during her widowhood or till my son William arrives to the age of twenty one years which ever happens first, but in case my Wife should Marry, then I desire my estate may be divided as I shall here after direct. I then give her the use of all my Lands in Surry, also Negroes, stocks of all kinds, household and kitchen furniture during her natural life, also I give her Nell and Rachell, my riding Carri= age, these are to be at her own disposal.-----

Item. I give and bequeath to my son William when he shall arrive to the age of twenty one years or the marriage or death of my Wife my land in Southampton on Notto-way River, given me by my father to him and his heirs forever.-----

Item. I give and bequeath unto my son Thomas when my son William arrives to the age of Twenty one years or the marriage or death of my Wife which shall happen first, my lands in Southampton, given me by my Uncle William Edwards, also the Land I purchased of Popes Executors and the Land I obtained with John Pope, to him and his heirs forever

Item. I give and bequeath unto my son Richard Henry all my Lands in Surry after my Wife’s natural death to him and his heirs forever.-----

my loving Wife being now pregnant, if she should have a son I give him in lieu of Lands and to make him as near equal as I can with the rest of my sons one thousand pounds to be paid him when he shall arrive to the age of twenty one years.
It is my Will and desire that all my Negroes except Nell and Rachell given to my Wife shall be equally divided between my daughter Ann, my sons William, Thomas, Richard Henry and the child my Wife being now pregnant with, to them and their heirs forever.—
I do appoint my loving Brother Richard Edwards my sole Executor to this my last Will and Testament
In Witness I have here unto set my hand and seal this second day of September 1791.

William Edwards

At a Court held for Surry County April 25th 1797
As the within written writing purporting the last Will of William Edwards deceased, was presented in Court by Richard Edwards the only Executor therein named, and the same having no witnesses subscribed thereto, Nicholas Faulcon, Richard Cocke, and John Nelson personal by appearance in Court and being first sworn declared that they are well acquainted with the hand writing of the said deceased and that they verily believe the same was wholly written and signed by him, whereunto on the same is received by the Court as and for the Last Will of the said William Edwards deceased and ordered to be recorded; and liberty is reserved the Executor to qualify when he may think fit: And as the same Court continued and held the 26th day of the aforesaid month, the said, Richard Edwards formally appraised in Court and having first made oath agreeably to Law, and gave bond, with Benjamin Edwards Browne and William Brown his securities in the sum of thirty thousand dollars, conditioned for the due Administration of the said deceased estate—certificate is granted him for obtaining a probate thereof in due form—

Teste,
Jacob Faulcon C.S.C.
The Probate Inventory of William Edwards VI

The forgoing Account contains a just and true Inventory of the Estate of which William Edwards did possess in the Country of Southampton excepting one Canoe, one Sow, + one Shack? at Amos ????sons + one Yearling at Edward Shelby’s, which were omitted to be shown to the appraisers

Richard Edwards Exec.

An appraisement of the Estate of William Edwards deceased in the County of Surry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Negro man named Titus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>£45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Negro man named Titus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>£75.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Negro woman Isabel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>£15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 work Steers</td>
<td></td>
<td>£30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Cows + 1 Calf</td>
<td></td>
<td>£17.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sows + 23 Shoats</td>
<td></td>
<td>£14.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Chariot + two sets of Harness</td>
<td></td>
<td>£35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item Description</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Unit Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 old Saddles + a small pillion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Saddle with plated Stirrup + a plated bit Bridle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 bridles + a ??? dingle 34/s - 2 Curry combs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 ox cart, wheels, 3 yokes + two chains L 8.2/- 2 pr. iron ??? dges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ploughs + harnesses 45/- 1 harness 12/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 flake shoes, 1 bar share + two coulters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 share plough + traces 22/- 1 ½ share ditto 9/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 scythes with cradles 39/- 7 grass ditto 18/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 narrow axes + 1 broad d. 39/- 1 whip saw</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 weeding hoes 30/- 2 Grubbing d. 6/- 2 old spades</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pr. steel ??/? 12/- 6 steel 6/- 2 pr. sheep shears</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 old reaping hooks + a parcel of old tools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 old pick hoes + a parcel of old shoe casts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 bbls: - 6 kk’s 5 Kgs + two stands with a little Lath</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ??/kk’? 18/- a parcel old kk’? - 13/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 wheat fan L 5.0.0 - 1 p. bushel 3/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Corn, supposed to be 45 bbths at 32/- p. barrel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peas, supposed to be 5 bushels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 still + Tub £14.0.0 - 1 apple mill £4.10/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a parcel of ??/? plank, supposed to be 100 fish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 doz. Ivory handle knives + forks 24/- 1 d. bone 12/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Knives + 12 forks 5/- 1 doz. silver tablespoons +</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Ladle £15.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pr. silver sugar tongs + 11/2 doz d. tea spoons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 doz. + 1 plates + 4 butter boats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 ? China Dishes 80/- 1 salad d. + 1 Coffee pot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 China bowls 42/- 3 ditto 10/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 China tea Cups + cup saucers 10/- 2 doz. d. Coffee d. 3/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 cream pots 2 tea ditto ? 2 sugar Dishes 14/- 4 pitchers £</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Mugs 10/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 salts 8/- 2 small decanters + 9 wine glasses 10/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 tumbler glasses 4/- 4 preserves ditto 4/- 1 old ??? £</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castors 3/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a parcel of glass ware 32/- 3 Waiters 6/- 1 doz. ??? m???/6/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tea – Kettles + 4 shafing dishes 30/- 6 milk pans and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two dozen ??/? ditto 11/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 old skillet + 1 spice mortar 11/- 1 Lafe 12/- 1 Churn 5/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Jugs, 11 butter pots + 1 water pitcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 flower pots 4/- 1 wash bowl + pitcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total                                                                 | 123.0    |            |             |
Amount brought forward – £

a parcel of pewter Basons, dishes + plates - - - -  2.14.0
4 pr. Ando. (?) irons - 3 pr. - Tongs- 2 shovels - 1 poker - + a fender  3.14.0
2 pr. old ditto an old fender + 3 pot racks - - - -  1.8.0
1 iron pot + hooks 12/ - 1 small d. 3/- 1 d. + hooks + iron
Kettle 32/- - - - - - - - - - - -  3.7.0

1 frying pan – 1 spit- + 1 grid iron 9/- 1 old Dutch oven 2/-  11.0
1 iron boiler 60/- 1 Copper kettle 72/- - - - - - - - -  6.12.0
3 Tubs + 1 Gin 19/- - 1 pine table + 2 pr. flat irons 14/- ---  1.13.0
4 spinning wheels + 7 pr. Ca?? 48/- - flax wheels + two Hackles 75/

2 trays, 4 pails, 1 ?earce + 2 sifters - - - - - - - -  7.7
1 loom, 5 sleys, + 5 sets of Harness - - - - - - - -  2.10.0
1 boat anchor + sails £7.15/- - 1 Canoe 30/- - - - -  9.5.0
14 black walnut Chairs £14.15/- - 8 old ditto 52/- ----  17.7.0
14 old Chairs 24/- - ½ doz. ?ush bottom ditto 18/- -  1.19.0
1 doz. Windsor Chairs £3.12/- - 1 doz. ditto £4.10/- -  8.2.0
2 large mahogany tables £12/10 – 2 Walnut d. £50/- -  15.2.0
3 small black Walnut Tables 30/- - 1 d. + table clothe 30/- -  3.0.0
1 old black Walnut Table 12/- - 1 small pine l. 2/- -  1.4.0
1 black walnut Desk + book case £8. – 1 d. Desk £6 -  14.0.0
1 small mahogany Desk £6 – 1 Candle stand 3/- -  6.3.0
1 looking glass 20/- - 1 d. 18/- - 1d. 10/- - 1 d. 6/- - - - -  2.14.0
1 spy glass £3.0.0 – 1 sword + a pair pistols £4.4.0 -  7.4.0
1 Case of razors 24/- - 1 ?haga can d. 20/- - - - - - -  2.4.0
3 sugar Canisters + 2 ??/? d. 15/- - 1 small tea Chest 10/-  1.5.0
3 pair money scales and weights - - - - - - - - - - - -  1.8.0
1 pair cotton ditto and ditto + a warming pan - - - - - -  1.8.0
5 Candlesticks + 2 pr. snuffers 25/- - 1 pr. scissors 3/- -  1.8.0
3 cases of bottles 22/- - 1 very large ditto 36/- - - - - - -  2.18.0
1 gross of quart bottles 42/- - 1 guaging rod 9/- - - - - -  2.11.0
1 gun £4.10.0 – 1d. 24/- - 1 tea Table lock 2/- - - - - - - -  5.16.0
Backgammon tables 12/- - 1 morocco pocket book 6/- -  1.8.0
4 Chest 29/- - 9 trunks £3.5.9 - - - - - - - - - - - - - -  4.14.9
1 shaving box, razor + strap 6/- - 1 dressing ditto 3/- ---  9.0
1 Cap board 12/- a parcel of Phials with a little medici-
cine 9/- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -  1.1.0

1 stock lock 6/- - a broken set of Desk mounting 12/-  1.8.0
2 kegs, 1 firkin + a large tray 9/- - 1 cann 2/- -  1.1.0
4 baskets 9/- - 1 hanking reel 2/- - 1 close stool 6/-  1.7.0
1 gallon + 1 pattle pewter measurers - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -  1.0.0
1 marble mortar + pestle 18/- - 1 small still 36/- - - - - - - -  2.14.0

(Amount carried forward) £
**Amount brought forward £**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 doz. candle moulds £3.0.0 - Nails £2.11.9 - - -</td>
<td>5.11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 hides + some assortments of leather - - -</td>
<td>6.2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 old Mortmataue?? - a pr. saddle bags + a pair chair ??? 1.4.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 horse whips 12/ - 1 horse standard + a brush 6/ - - -</td>
<td>.18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bee hives 45/ - 3 empty d. 3/ - - - - -</td>
<td>2.8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 sturgeon lines + hooks - a mouth - hook + harpoon -</td>
<td>1.12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 chamber pots 8/ - Fish-hooks 8/ - - - -</td>
<td>.16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>twine / head + twist 12/ - 1 old umbrella 6/ - - -</td>
<td>.18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spun cotton supposed to be 27 ?? - - - -</td>
<td>6.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>picked d. d. 6? 12/ seed d. 20? 7/ - - - -</td>
<td>.13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wool supposed to be 60? 60/ - Flax 60? 39/ -</td>
<td>4.19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 beds + bedsteads with pillows + boulsters - - -</td>
<td>45.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 d. - - - d. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -</td>
<td>23.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 hides for the bed 24/ - 3 bags of feathers £4.19.0 - - - - - - - - - - -</td>
<td>6.3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 bed blankets £8.10/ - 3 Dutch ditto 30/ - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -</td>
<td>10.0.0</td>
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Pursuant to an order of Surry Court bearing date on April last, we the undersigned have appraised the personal estate of William Edwards deceased in this County, agreeably to the foregoing accounts, and find this amount thereof to be two thousand + twenty five pounds,
The foregoing account contains a just + true Inventory of the personal estate of which William Edwards died possessed in the county of Surry, except the dead victuals and liquors which were laid in by the testator for consumption in his family, + excepting also four thousand, three hundred eighty one pounds of Bacon which was sent bygone previous to the appraisement, to Richmond to be there disposed of, and likewise a hand-mill, which was omitted to be shown to the appraisers

Richard Edwards Exec

At a Court held for Surry County September 26th 1797

The afore written Inventory and Appraisement of the Estate of William Edwards deceased was returned and by the Court ordered to be recorded.

Teste

Jacob Faulcon C.S.C.
## Appendix B: Surry County Probate Data

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Appendix C
Peyton Randolph and Thomas Nelson Jr. Probate Inventories

The Probate Inventory of Peyton Randolph

http://www.gunstonhall.org/probate/RNDLPH76.PDF
York County, Virginia
York County Wills & Inventories No. 22 1771-1783 pp. 337-341
Ordered: 20 November 1775
Taken: 5 January 1776
Recorded: 15 July 1776

Inventory and Appraisement of the Estate of Peyton Randolph Esqr. in York County Taken Janr. the 5th 1776
12 Mahogany Chairs £15. 2 Mahogany tables £8 £ 23. 0. 0
1 Card table £2 1 Marble Table £2 4. 0. 0
1 Side Board table 20/ 1 Carpet 20/ 2. 0. 0
4 looking Glasses £20 1 pr. End Irons £2 22. 0. 0
5 China Bowls £5 5 China Mugs 15/ 5.15. 0
8 doz: red and white China plates £6 22 Do. dishes £5 11.
0. 0
1 Blue and White China Tureen 20/ 11 Blue & White
dishes £4 5. 0. 0
4 Blue & White China Sauce boats 10/ 2 Do. potting
pots 15/ 1. 5. 0
21 Custard Cups & Patty pans 10/ 6 Scollop Shells 15/ 1. 5.
0
12 Egg Cups 6/ 13 Blue and White Coffee Cups &
Saucers 10/ .16. 0
18 Blue and White China Plates 22/ 5 Beer Glasses 5/ 1. 7.
0
4 fruit Baskets 20/ 1 Queen China Mug & Sugar dish 2/ 1. 2.
0
1 Marble Bowl 15/ 15 Water Glasses 30/ 2. 5. 0
10 Wine Glasses 12/ 5 punch Do. 5/ .17. 0
1 Mahogany Tray 10/ 9 Decanters and 4 Baskets 25/ 1.15. 0
1 Do. Case containing 2 Bottles 25/ 1. 5. 0
1 round Mahogany table 26/ 1 plate Warmer 12/ 1.18. 0
492 Oz: plate @ 7/6 184.10. 0
1 plate Basket and 2 knives Do. 10/ 3½ doz: knives
and forks Do. £5 5.10. 0
1 Mahogany tea Board 7/6 Japand waiters 10/ .17. 0
1 Chariot and 8 Harness 60. 0. 0
5 Chariot Horses £230 3 Cart Do. £25 255. 0. 0
1 Mare and Colt £40 1 riding Horse £30 70. 0. 0
1 Phaton £15 5 Cows £20 35. 0 . 0
2 Carts and 1 Tumbrill and Harness 20. 0 . 0
11 Frying pans at 3/ 1.13. 0
25 Bushels Salt at 3/ 3.15. 0
A parcel Wool 40/ a parcel Hemp and Flax 10/ 2.10. 0
5 Bushels Malt 15/ .15. 0
4 old Scythe 10/ 1 Bedstead 15/ a Cross Cut Saw 15/ 2. 0 . 0
10 old Sacks 5/ a parcel of Tallow 25/ a pr.
Stilliards 12/6 2. 2. 6
a parcel Corks 50/ a pipe of Sower Cyder 40/ 4.10. 0
48 Table Cloths £46.15 36 Towells £2.11 49. 6 . 0
9 Napkins 18/ 11 pr. Sheets £16.10 2 pr Virginia Do £2 19.
8. 0
6 pr. pillow Cases 15/ 2 Side Board Cloths 5/ 1. 0 . 0
a parcel Queens China Ware & Sundry Articles Sent to
Wilton 5. 0 . 0
a Sett of Ornamental China 20. 0 . 0
1 doz: Mahogany Chairs 24. 0 . 0
2 fire Screens £5 1 Card table £2 7. 0 . 0
1 Wilton Carpet £10 1 Tea table 20/ 1 Do. 30/ 12.10. 0
1 Sett China & Tea Board £3 1 Ditto & Do. 40/ 5. 0 . 0
1 Looking Glass £10 1 pr. Tongs, poker Shovel &
Fender 20/ 11. 0 . 0
1 Black Walnut press £3 3. 0 . 0
5 Flax Wheels 2 Check Reels & 2 Common Reels 5. 0 . 0
A dressing table and Glass £5 a Desk and Book Case £7 12.
0 . 0
6 old Chairs £3 1 Easy Chair 20/ 4. 0 . 0
a Small Cabinet & a parcel old China 2. 0 . 0
a Fender & pr. Tongs 3/ . 3. 0
1 Sett old Blue damask Curtains 30/ 2 pr. Window Do. 30/ 3.
0 . 0
Sundry Articles in Mrs. Randolph's Closet 3. 0 . 0
1 Warming pan & pr. Scales & Weights 10/ 2 Spinning
Wheels 15/ 1. 5. 0
1 Coal Skuttle 5/ 8 pewter dishes 40/ 2. 5. 0
2 doz: pewter plates £3 a parcel old pewter 20/ 4. 0 . 0
3 Copper Kettles £15 8 Copper Stew pans £5 20. 0 . 0
1 Safe 30/ 5 pales 10/ 2 fish Kettles and Covers £3 5. 0 . 0
1 Bell Metal Skillet 15/ 1 Marble Mortar 20/ 1.15. 0
1 Small Marble Mortar 5/ 1 Brass Mortar 5/ .10. 0
1 Grid Iron 2 dripping pans & 2 frying pans 25/ 1. 5. 0
3 Iron pots 40/ 1 Tea Kettle 15/ 1 Do. 15/ 12.30. 0
1 Jack, 2 Spitits and a pr. Kitchen Dogs 5. 0 . 0
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<td>40/ 2.3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Lanthorn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Dressing table Glass and Toilet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Mahogany Chairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£6 1 Bed Table</td>
<td>£1.10.7.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 China Bason and Bottle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20/ 1.0.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Bedstead and Suit Cotton Curtains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15.0.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Do. and Do. Virginia Cloth Do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10.0.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 pr. Window Curtains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40/ 1 old Carpet</td>
<td>10/ 2.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sett Callico Curtains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50/ 5 Quilts</td>
<td>£5 7.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Chintz Bed Cover</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£3 3.0.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Feather beds, 7 Bolsters &amp; 9 pillows</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40.0.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 hair Mattresses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 Counterpanes</td>
<td>£12 18.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Wool Do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£3 6 pr. New Blankets</td>
<td>£9 7 old Do. £4 16.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 yards Irish Linnen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@ 5/ £12.15 25 yards</td>
<td>£5 6.0 19.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 ps. Fustian Dimity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25/ 100 lb Wt. Sugar</td>
<td>£7.10 8.15.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


a parcel Sylabub & Jelly Glasses, 4 Salvers, 8 Water \ 
Glasses 22 Wine Do. \_ 3. 0. 0 
and 3 Glass Candlesticks / 
1 Corner Cupboard & a parcel Physick 5. 0. 0 
1 Japann'd Tea Board 5/ 3 Globe Candle sticks 30/ 1.15. 0 
1 Screen 30/ a Trussel and 4 old Trunks 20/ 2.10. 0 
4 Mahogany Chairs £4 1 dressing Glass 30/ 5.10. 0 
1 Carpet 5/ 1 old Fender shovel and Tongs 3/ . 8. 0 
1 Bedstead & Suit Virginia Curtains and Window Curtains 10. 
0. 0 
a mahogany press £3 3. 0. 0 
1 pine Table and Looking Glass 15/ 3 old Chairs 15/ 1.10. 0 
2 Bedsteads 15/ 1 Fender 5/ 3 Chairs 15/ 1.15. 0 
1 Bedstead 10/ 1 old Chest drawers 15/ 1. 5. 0 
1 pine Table 5/ 1 Floor Cloth 20/ 1 passage Do. 8/ 1.13. 0 
5 Hoes, 1 Dung fork, 1 Garden Rake and Spade .15. 0 
1 Wheel Barrow 8/ 1 pr. Money Scales 10/ .18. 0 
8 doz: Bottles at 30/ Gro: 1. 0. 0 
About 100 Bushels dust Coal 2.10. 0 
a parcel old casks and Tubs .10. 0 
1 Steel Mill 3. 0. 0 
a Library of Books as pr. Catalogue 250. 0. 0 
£ 1578.14. 6 
Negroes 
Johnny 100. 0. 0 
Jack 25. 0. 0 
Billy 100. 0. 0 
Watt 100. 0. 0 
Bacchas 10. 0. 0 
Ben 80. 0. 0 
Cesar 25. 0. 0 
George 30. 0. 0 
Henry 30. 0. 0 
Sam 40. 0. 0 
William 30. 0. 0 
(Page 341) 
Bob 25. 0. 0 
Cosar 30. 0. 0 
Watt 25. 0. 0 
Eve 100. 0. 0 
Charlotte 80. 0. 0 
Aggy 60. 0. 0 
Succordia 10. 0. 0 
Little Aggy 60. 0. 0 
Kitty 20. 0. 0 
Betsey 10. 0. 0 
Lucy 60. 0. 0
In Obedience to an Order of York Court dated the 20th of November 1775 We the Subscribers being first Sworn before a Magistrate of Said City have Appraised the Estate of Peyton Randolph Esq: as Within
J. Dixon
Wm Pierce
Alexr Craig
Returned into York County Court the 15th day of July 1776
And Ordered to be
Recorded
Examd. Teste
Thos: Everard Cl. Curr.

The Probate Inventory of General Thomas Nelson

http://www.gunstonhall.org/probate/NELSON89.PDF
York County, Virginia
York County Wills & Inventories No. 23, 1781-1811 pp. 181-183
Taken: 2 June 1789
Recorded: 20 July 1789

Appraisement of the Estate of General Thomas Nelson deceased in York County June the second one thousand seven hundred and Eighty nine.
Dineing Room
1 Dozen green Windsor Chairs £ 4.16. 0
2 Mohogony Dineing Tables 11. 0 .  0
1 black walnut side Board 3.12. 0
1 ditto writing Table 1.10. 0
1 large Turkey Carpet 13.10. 0
1 pair And Irons and Tongs .18. 0
1 fire Skreene 1. 5 .  0
1 large Looking Glass with scones £5 1 Ditto Chimney with sconces £3.10 8.10. 0
3 blue and White China Bowles (not sound) 1. 5. 0
3 Enamel'd ditto (one cracked) 2.10. 0
1 Tea board 2 Tea pots 7 Coffee Cups, 7 Tea ditto,
8 Sauces & 1 Bowl 1.10. 0
3 Tumblers, 5 Crewitts & 4 Glass Salts & 1 Glass mustard
pot with a spoon .15. 0
15 Queens China Dishes 40/ 18 Plates 4/6 2. 4. 6
1 Dozen do Wash Basons .10. 0
1 Mohogony Tea Board 2 Sliders & 2 Japan'd waiters .12. 0
1 dozen Shallow and 7 deep blue and white China plates .18.
0
1 China blue and white Tureen 1.10. 0
1 Tea Kettle and Trivit 12/6 1 Japaned plate warmer 12/6 1.
5. 0
2 Tin Lanterns 8/ 2 Tin Coffee Pot 4/ .12. 0
6 Brass flat Candle sticks 18/ 2 high ditto 10/ 1. 8. 0
6 high fluted brass Candlesticks 2. 8. 0
7 pair Steel snuffers 10/ 1 Tin Cheese toaster 1/6 .11. 6
2 Knife Trays lined with Tin . 5. 0
2 dozen Ivory handle Table knives and forks 2.10. 0
26 knives ditto smaller & 50 Forks 1.15. 0
1 Silver Soup spoon 40/ 10 Table spoons and
1 marrow spoon £8 10. 0. 0
1 dozen Desert spoons 96/ 13 Tea spoons 40/ 6.16. 0
1 Tankard 3 Waiters, 1 Salver, 1 porringer \
in pint can & 1 Pepper box \_ 40.15. 0
weight 108 oz. 16 dwt. @ 7/6 /
2 ps Carpeting side Board . 6. 0
1 silver mounted Fowling piece 6. 0. 0
1 pair Silver Capt Pistols 30/ 1 pair brass
Barrell ditto 30/ 3. 0. 0
1 black Walnut Desk £3 1 Backgammon Table 24/ 4. 4. 0
1 shaving Glass Mahogony Case . 3. 0
In the passage
1 Glass Lantern £6 1 Looking Glass £3.10
1 ps Carpeting £2.5 11.15. 0
In the Drawing Room
2 arm & 1 Dozen Mohogony chairs with leather Bottoms 22. 0.
0
1 Round Mahogony Tea Tables 40/ 1 Cherry ditto 40/ 4. 0. 0
2 Mohogony Tea boards 15/ .15. 0
1 Looking Glass £5 1 Chimney Ditto 50/ 7.10. 0
1 pair And Irons shovel and tongs brass heads 2. 0. 0
1 Scotch Carpet 5. 0. 0
In the Chamber
1 Bed Matrass boulster Bedstead and suit Yellow
Morrain Curtains £ 25. 0. 0
6 Mohogony Chairs £9 1 dressing Table and Glass £6 15. 0. 0
1 large ditto Desk £10 1 ditto spice press 30/ 11.10. 0
1 mohogony sugar box 40/ 1 Carpet 15/ 2.15. 0
1 pair And Irons Tongs and Bellows 1. 0. 0
In the Back Parlour
4 Walnut Chairs 20/ 1 ditto Tea Table 20/ 2. 0. 0
1 large ditto round Dining Table 1.10. 0
1 pair old And Irons . 5. 0
In the Chintz Room
2 Beds boulsters & Bedsteads @ 90/ 9. 0. 0
5 black walnut Chairs 50/ 1 ditto Table 6/ 2.16. 0
1 dressing Glass £3 1 pair and Irons 7/6 3. 7. 6
1 set Table China consisting 1 Tureen and dish \n28 dishes 4 pudding ditto 87 plates \_ 20. 0. 0
27 desert ditto and two butter boats /
1 Compleat set Tea China 6. 0. 0
1 China bason and bottle 15/ 1 Glass bowl and plate 6/ 1.
1. 0
2 large Decanters 20/ 5 quart Decanters 15/ 1.15. 0
1 Glass Funnel & 13 Wine Glasses & 1 beer Glass .12. 0
1 Glass Tumbler with a top Glass mustard pot & Crewit . 5.
0
2 small stone Pots 12/ 2 China Salts 1/3 .13. 3
1 Glass Epern 7. 0. 0
In the Room over the Drawing Room
1 Bed boulster Matrass, pr. Pillows Bedstead & a suit
blue morrain Curtains 20. 0. 0
1 Table and glass 20/ 2 Mohogony and 2 Windsor Chairs 60/ 4.
0. 0
2 small Carpets 10/ 1 pair And Irons Tongs and shovel 12/
1. 2. 0
In the Room over the Dining room
1 Bed boulster, 2 pillows 1 matrass mahogony \
Bedstead with a suit red \_ 28. 0. 0
Morrain Curtains /
1 Mahogony low Bedstead Bed boulster and 2 Pillows 12. 0. 0
1 Black walnut Bedstead Bed boulster and 2 ditto 10. 0. 0
1 Bed Oznabrigs Tick with 1 pillow 2. 0. 0
6 Mahogony Chairs £12 1 Wash Stand 20/ 13. 0. 0
1 Table and Dressing Glass £3 1 Carpet 25/ 4. 5. 0
2 Bed Carpets 6/ 1 pair And Irons Tongs and shovel 40/ 2.
6. 0
5 pair best Bed Blankets £10. 5 pair old ditto £4 14. 0. 0
21 pair Sheets different qualities @ 30/ 31.10. 0
2 mersails Quilts £6 4 patch Callico Quilts £8 14. 0. 0
6 White Countepins £7.10 8 Chex Ditto £4 11.10. 0
18 pillow Cases 54/ 40 Towels different sorts £4 6.14. 0
16 Damask Table Cloths different Qualities @ 20/ 16. 0. 0
38 ditto Napkins different qualities @ 4/ 7.12. 0
In the Room over the Chamber
3 Bedsteads with beds @ £5 15. 0. 0
5 leather bottom Chairs 30/ 1 pine Table 5/ 1.15. 0
1 pair And Irons Tongs and shovel .15. 0

In the Passage up Stairs
a pair Globes £3 1 large Leather Trunk brass nails 30/ 4.10. 0
a parcel of Books 30. 0. 0
In the Kitchen
9 Pewter Dishes 72/ 3 pewter dish covers 15/ 4. 7. 0
6 Tin dish covers 18/ 1 pewter & 1 Tin cullender 1. 8. 0
2 Copper Fish Kettles 60/ two ditto stewpans 40/ 5. 0. 0
1 preserving Pan and cover .15. 0
Forks Skimmers Ladies and Graters 10/ .10. 0
3 bell mettle Skillets 60/ 1 Spice Mortar 7/6 3. 7. 6
6 Iron Pots & 1 Dutch Oven with Hooks and hangers 3. 0. 0
3 Spitts 15/ 2 Frying pans 8/ 2 Grid Irons 8/ 1.11. 0
1 pair And Irons Tongs and shovel 50/ 1 dripping pan 10/ 3.
one large Kitchen Pine Table .10. 0
2 Coppers & 2 Iron Kettles £12. 6 Tubs and Pails 12/ 12.12.

At the Stable
a Wagon and Gear £25 5 Mules @ £15 £75 100. 0. 0
a Charriot and Harness for 4 Horses 60. 0. 0
4 Charriot Horses @ £25 £100 a bay Mare £8 108. 0. 0
12 Milch Cows £36 1 saddle & 2 bridles 40/ 38. 0. 0
a saddle (newer) 3.10. 0
1 Tumbrill £3.10 1 old ditto with one Wheel 30/ 5. 0. 0
In the Store
a pine writing Desk £3 a Pine Table 6/ 3. 6. 0
a black walnut writing Table 2. 0. 0
1 Iron pot 6/ 1 dripping Pan 10/ 3 Spades 30/ 1.16. 0
2 black walnut chairs 20/ 9 sett brass Chair boxes 45/ 3.
5. 0
5 sett Iron Chair boxes 12/6 1 Iron Chain 20/ 1.12. 6
1 Cask read lead dry 25/ 1. 5. 0
1 pair Grocers scales with lead Weights . 5. 0
New plate in the House
2 Dozen Table Spoons 6 Gravy ditto 1 Dozen Tea \ Spoons 6 Salt Spoons \

1 peper do 1 Mustard ditto, 6 Salt Cellars, 1 Sugar \_ 162. 0. 0
dish a Rim & Casters /
& 1 milk pot weighing in the whole 150 oz. 1 dwt /
Silver Epern weighing 92: 19
243: 7 @ 13/4 P Oz
Glasses and Box belonging to it 8. 0. 0
one pair large Money scales 1. 5. 0
Negroes
Cook Cain £80 old Tryal £10 Sukey £15 105. 0. 0
Wagoner Cain £70 Peter £40 Penny £40 150. 0. 0
Keffy £30 Grace £40 Krender and her Infant £45 115. 0. 0
Rose £35 Sue £25 Beck £15 Betty £50 125. 0. 0
Lucy Mountfort £40 Bob £17.10 Sally £15 72.10. 0
Sukey £10 [Edy?] £10 [old Letty?] £[?] Fanny £10 42.10. 0
Aggy £40 Betty £12 Dinah £5 Betsy £20 77. 0. 0
Cooper £25 Phil £65 Roger £45 Child George £30 65. 0. 0
Jerry £17.10 Aggy £20 Massey £45 82.10. 0
Letty & Child Grace £45 Betty £20 Sinah £15 80. 0. 0
Peggy £40 Judy £30 Dinah £20 Jammey £25 115. 0. 0
old Hannah £15 Phillis £5 Nancy & Child Tom £55 75. 0. 0
Joan £17.10 Rachael £15 Else £12 Charles £5 19.10. 0
Charles £40 John £40 George £40 York £40 160. 0. 0
At the Quarter
an old Waggon £10 old ox Cart £2 12. 0. 0
Red Waggon £15 Ox Cart £17.10 Rolling Cart £1.10 34. 0. 0
Two whip saws £3 1 Cross Cut 40/ Grind stone 6/ 3.16. 0
4 narrow Axes 12/ 9 Weeding hoes 27/ 1.19. 0
2 Chip Ploughs and Gear £2 4 small half shear Ditto 32/ 3.12. 0
5 Harrow shanks 25/ 3 [ ? ] [ ?] [harrow?] 30/ 2.15. 0
1 Hay Harrow with Iron teeth 12/6 6 Iron Wedges 24/ 1.16. 6
3 Ox Chains 15/ 4 Grubbing Hoes 12/ 3 Spades 9/ 1.16. 0
4 Ox Yokes and Staples 40/ 6 hogs £6 8. 0. 0
5 Mules £55 13 Oxen £52 Wheat Fan £3 110. 0. 0
23 grown Cattle £69 15 young ditto £18.15 87.15. 0
20 old sheep & 9 Lambs £18. 12 Coopers Tooles £2.10 21. 2. 0
£ 2790.19. 3
Wm Reynolds
Matthew Pope \_ sworn before Hugh
Corbin Griffin / Nelson Gent.
Returned into York County Court the twentieth day of July
1789 and Ordered
to be recorded
Teste Ro: H. Walter Cl. Curt.
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No Author

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VITA

Donald Sadler

Donald Sadler was born and raised in Surry County, Virginia, spending his early years in the fields of Chestnut Farms. His love of history and archaeology was born here. He graduated from Great Bridge High School in 1986. After spending more than a decade pursuing a career in music, Sadler returned to his first love of archaeology. He graduated from the College of William and Mary with Honors in Anthropology. In the fall of 2001, he enrolled in the Historical Archaeology program at the College of William and Mary in pursuit of a M.A. Degree. Donald Sadler defended his thesis in November of 2006. He is currently employed as the Field Supervisor for Archaeological and Cultural Solutions, Inc. in Williamsburg, Virginia, specializing in seventeenth and eighteenth-century historical sites.