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"Goods -- Agreeable to the Association": The Scottish Merchant Trade and Early Tea Boycotts in Virginia

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"Goods... Agreeable to the Association": The Scottish Merchant Trade and Early Tea Boycotts in Virginia

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Buena Vista, Virginia

B.A., Birmingham-Southern College, 2003

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

American Studies Program

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

Master of Arts

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A significant element of Virginia’s eighteenth-century history centers on the rise of the Scottish merchant trade with that colony. Important relationships developed between the Scottish merchants who resided in Virginia, their Glasgow-based firms, and the merchants’ middling tobacco-planter patrons. This thesis examines the ledger entries of one Scottish firm – John Glassford and Company – as a means to understand more fully the Scottish merchant trade narrative and to identify the ceramic tea wares that the merchants provided their patrons amidst the early non-importation movement.

Scottish firms like John Glassford and Company established chains of stores that advanced credit to middling planters in exchange for their crops. The planters used the credit in order to purchase necessary and superfluous goods that enabled the planters to subsist between planting, harvesting, and prizing their sot-weed. The merchants, firms, and tobacco planters complemented each other and enabled Scotland and Virginia to fulfill the mercantilist policy requirements of the British Crown.

Although one might surmise otherwise, the establishment of non-importation associations shortly after Parliament instituted a tax on tea in 1767 neither stopped the Scottish merchants from importing tea or tea wares nor the planters from purchasing the wares from the Scottish stores.
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“GOODS...AGREEABLE TO THE ASSOCIATION”: THE SCOTTISH MERCHANT
TRADE AND EARLY TEA BOYCOTTS IN VIRGINIA
INTRODUCTION

In 1771 the Virginia Gazette published a letter concerning the uprightness of two merchants who had shown their worthiness as supporters of the non-importation movement in Virginia.

[B]ut we [the committee of the associators] must beg leave to represent to you, Sir, the real necessity there is for speedily convening a sufficient number of the associators, to form such regulations as may put all the members upon an equal footing, in practice as well as theory; for, at present, those who faithfully adhere to their engagements have the mortification, not only of seeing their own good intentions frustrated by the negligence, the insincerity, and the mal-practices of others, but many of them find themselves, from the same causes, greatly embarrassed in their business, and their trade daily falling into the hands of men, who have not acted upon the same honourable principles, and who have very little title to the countenance, or even the connivance of the public.”  

From the above excerpt the reader gleans that such merchant support for the non-importation associations’ “honourable principles” was not the status quo. But the petitioners need not have placed all of the blame on those merchants of ill repute who exhibited “very little title to the… connivance of the public.” After all, commerce is at least a two-way street in which merchants provide goods to patrons who willfully purchase the goods they vend.

The Virginia Gazette letter, written three years after the organization of the first non-importation associations in Virginia, tells the story of the associators’ continued

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1 Virginia Gazette, Rind, July 18, 1771. All subsequent Virginia Gazette references will be noted as VG.
struggle to make a “go” of the non-importation movement. More positive proof of this
difficult scenario is evidenced by examining the objects listed in the merchants’ account
books. By the second half of the eighteenth century, Scottish merchants or factors in
Virginia held the upper-hand in that colony’s colonial commercial world. The chains of
stores established throughout the Commonwealth by Glasgow-based firms gave
testimony to the Scottish force that permeated the colony’s tobacco economy.

In the 1984 Winterthur Portfolio article entitled “Ceramics and the Sot-weed
Factor: The China Market in a Tobacco Economy,” Regina Lee Blaszczyk identifies and
describes the ceramic wares in which Scottish merchants dealt during the mid-to-late-
eighteenth century. The historian explores the ceramic trade between Scottish merchants
and their tobacco planter-patrons by using the ceramic wares as a means to illustrate the
planter/factor relationship.

Similarly this study focuses on the ceramic trade of Scottish merchants in
Virginia, concentrating specifically on the tea wares that the Scots imported into the
colony amidst the early non-importation movement of 1769. By so doing it is the
author’s hope to shed light on the question “How did the 1769 establishment of non-
importation associations – the colonial boycott response to the tax on tea and other goods
– affect the Scottish merchant importation of ceramic tea wares to Virginia? In other
words, did the organization of the tea boycotts influence the stock of goods that the
Scottish merchants imported and maintained for their patrons?

The answer to this question requires more than an isolated analysis of the
merchant records. It necessitates an understanding of (1) the relationship that existed
between the Scottish factors and their Glasgow-based firms and the Virginia tobacco
planters, (2) the interrelated importance of tobacco to the colony and to Scotland, (3) the rise of the non-importation societies, and (4) the objects – ceramic tea wares – themselves and their social implications.

Although the literature written on each of these individual topics is vast, very few publications address the four topics collectively. For instance, books like William Tatham’s 1799 expository treatise on tobacco production, *An Historical and Practical Essay on the Culture and Commerce of Tobacco*, and T.H. Breen’s more recent social history of the weed, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of the Revolution*, look at the importance of tobacco in eighteenth-century Virginia. But Tatham’s text never addresses the prominent role that the Scots played in the trade, and Breen’s work only addresses the trade in general terms.²

Other studies such as Scottish historian T.M. Devine’s monumental work *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and Their Trading Activities, c. 1740-90*, and his more recent book *Scotland’s Empire and the Shaping of the Americas, 1600-1815* examine the Scottish merchant trade from an economic perspective and through the eyes of the Glaswegians. J. H. Soltow and Jacob Price, in their respective works, also scrutinize the trade from an economic standpoint; but they focus on the effect that the trade had on the American colonies, Virginia in particular.³

² It should be noted that Breen’s study focuses mainly on the consignment system of tobacco enterprise. Breen’s newest publication *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* enumerates on the difference between the consignment system and the store system in “Chapter 4: Vade Mecum: The Great Chain of Colonial Acquisition” of his text. The difference in the two systems is addressed later in this paper.

While these texts do address the changes that the sot-weed trade imposed on the Virginian and Scottish landscapes, only recently have authors turned to material culture as a means to examine the Scottish merchants’ commercial endeavors. T.H. Breen’s latest work *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* is an example of such an approach used as a means to interpret the American Revolution and the years immediately preceding it. The war is viewed from a consumer perspective as the historian traces changing buying habits in America and correlates those changing habits with the resultant Revolution. Breen discusses a vast array of goods (including ceramics, furniture, silver, textiles, etc.), employs inventories as his major primary sources, and explains that – at least in part – a successful economy provided the means necessary for Colonial Americans to rise up against their British cousins. Where do the Scottish merchants fit into his thesis? One place is the author’s discussion of the customs issues associated with bringing goods into the colonies.\(^4\) The eighteenth-century importation of goods into the tobacco-dependent colony of Virginia presupposes the existence of Scottish merchants. The author’s discussion of boycotts is also important to an understanding of how the merchants in general fulfilled their patrons’ wishes.\(^5\)

Breen’s work is an expansion upon the method employed by Regina Lee Blaszczyk in her previously mentioned article “Ceramics and the Sot-Weed Factor.” Just as Blaszczyk uses the objects to help give an account of Scottish merchant presence, Breen uses objects in a similar fashion. The shift in focus from *buyer and seller* to *commodity* enables both authors to ask and answer new questions regarding the influence


of merchants and tobacco in eighteenth-century America. Whereas Breen’s study is a history that uses objects as supporting elements of his story, Blaszczyk’s article is an object study in historical perspective. But both Breen and Blaszczyk use objects as the controls for their respective consumer histories.

Blaszczyk’s object-centric social history presents and studies ceramics as primary documents in order to provide insight into the trade between Scottish merchants and colonial tobacco farmers. Her article examines the Scottish merchant trade in the colonial tobacco economy through an analysis of the daybooks of specific Scottish factors, namely Alexander Hamilton who was a factor of the large Glaswegian-based firm Glassford and Company. Blaszczyk uses Hamilton’s daybooks in order to identify and describe the ceramic wares in which Hamilton traded. Her work is fundamental because it “investigate[s] a ceramics marketing system and uncover[s] data relating to ceramic types and pricing by exploring a particular class of records” that until the time of her 1984 publication were “previously unused by ceramics historians.” The author’s material culture approach provides the reader with a historical context for the objects studied. Blaszczyk’s and Breen’s use of objects embodies material culture theorist Leora Auslander’s argument that “objects are not only the product of history, they are active agents in history.”

Taken together, the literature on the Scottish trade with colonial America is varied, yet the majority of the texts are, not surprisingly, economic in nature. It is important to note that the texts all use similar sources – merchant records, planter diaries,

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7 Blaszczyk, 18.
store inventories, etc. – in order to tell their respective narratives, however. Despite their
different methods, each author tells of the influence that the Scottish merchant system
had on the Virginia tobacco trade. As the authors weave that story into their larger
frameworks, collectively they illustrate the dominance of Scotland’s presence in
eighteenth-century Virginia and the global colonial tobacco market. Blaszczyk and
Breen, in his most recent work, help bring that history to life by not only examining the
documents from the quantitative economic approach that is so prevalent in Scottish
transatlantic studies, but also by reading the documents as sources from which to glimpse
the social and aesthetic preferences of the people who used the objects mentioned.

Also essential to this study are essays on the significance of tea. Many treatises
written specifically on tea and tea consumption reveal the importance of the beverage to
eighteenth-century British and Anglo-American society. One of the most notable is
Rodris Roth’s essay on the subject. The author’s examination of material culture
provides further documentation for tea drinking customs and the ephemera that
accompanied the habit in colonial America. The National Trust’s recent publication A
Social History of Tea by Jane Pettigrew looks at the role that tea played on the English
stage and, consequently, at the beverage’s influence on society in Britain’s American
colonies. Both publications use objects as props in order to give the reader a more
complete understanding of the ramifications that tea drinking and tea bans had on
everyday life in the eighteenth century. As a result, the material culture examined in each
study – and arguably in any material culture investigation – can be used to provide

historians with a more complete picture of the era studied, "and thus complement data from newspapers, journals, publications, and writings of the same period."\(^{11}\)

The aim of this paper is to employ a material culture approach – much like that of Breen and Blaszczyk – in order to shed light on the connection between the transatlantic, Scottish-dominated colonial tobacco trade and Virginia’s early non-importation association policies.

Many primary sources could function as the fulcrum for such a collective study, but the Glassford Records and the *Virginia Gazette* serve as the “archive” for this study. Complemented by other primary and secondary sources, the examination of both the merchant records and the colonial-Virginia newspaper provides one means to identify and to illustrate the ceramic tea wares that were traded, consequently serving as one lens through which to decipher the relationship that existed between the Scottish merchants and colonial Virginians in the Commonwealth’s eighteenth-century tobacco economy.

Publications on material culture necessarily depend on two-dimensional images; this paper is not an exception to that rule. Thus, for visual purposes, object references identified in the merchant records are paired with corresponding objects found in various collections.

This paper will first describe the development and organization of the Scottish merchant system in connection with the Virginia tobacco planter; then it will identify and describe the tea wares mentioned in the records examined. Finally this study will discuss the significance of the Glassford Records in light of the non-importation associations.

\(^{11}\) Roth, 441.
FIGURE 1

Map of Scotland Illustrating the Location of Glasgow. Courtesy of the Glasgow Bureau of Tourism.
FIGURE 2A


FIGURE 2B

CHAPTER I

THE SCOTTISH MERCHANT AND TOBACCO-PLANTER RELATIONSHIP: COOPERATIVE COEXISTENCE IN A MERCANTILE ECONOMY

After John Rolfe introduced a higher grade of tobacco into early seventeenth-century Virginia, sot-weed production took root as the economic mainstay of the colony.\(^{12}\) With the exception of a short lapse in production after Bacon’s Rebellion, tobacco remained the Commonwealth’s economic staple for almost two centuries.\(^{13}\) During that period a so-called “tobacco culture” developed.\(^{14}\)

The aforementioned William Tatham wrote one of the earliest treatises on colonial tobacco production. In his late eighteenth-century publication *An Historical and Practical Essay on the Culture and Commerce of Tobacco* the author takes a pragmatic approach to his subject, presupposing the text to serve as a handbook (1) for those interested in the tradition of influence that sot-weed production had on colonial America and (2) for those already trafficking in the trade.\(^{15}\) The fact that an author contemporary to the crop’s height of production compiled an entire text on the weed gives further proof of the crop’s prominent place in colonial Virginia’s economy and everyday life. Interestingly, however, Tatham includes very little about the role that the crop played in Britain’s eighteenth-century mercantile system. Perhaps the author takes for granted the

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\(^{13}\) Deetz, 54.


relationship that existed between merchants and tobacco planters and the fact that each group was indebted to the other.

It is true that early in the colony’s history, tobacco became synonymous with the Virginian “way of life.” However, the rise in production of the cash crop is more than a mere agrarian history. As Breen notes, “tobacco in eighteenth-century Virginia” ought to be viewed “the way that a modern anthropologist might view coffee or sugar in contemporary Caribbean societies.”¹⁶ That is to say, “the planters’ economic life” should be perceived “as a series of highly personal, value-laden relationships.”¹⁷ One of those “value-laden relationships” was the one that existed between planter and merchant.

Breen illustrates the dominant role that Scottish and English merchants played in the lives of the Tidewater planters. For Virginia’s big and small planters, the weed embodied a social history.¹⁸ The planters dealt on a daily basis with the uncertainties of growing the Virginia staple crop that was their fundamental source of livelihood. The crop’s thirteen-month production necessitated the establishment of a credit system which enabled the planters to live between the times of planting, harvesting, and production.¹⁹ This merchant-credit system became an essential characteristic of the colony’s tobacco trade.

At first a system of consignment dominated the Virginia landscape. The consignment merchant served as a go-between for the large planter who entrusted the consignment merchant with the task of selling his tobacco in the overseas British market.

¹⁷ Ibid., xii.
¹⁸ Ibid., 3-4.
In this system the planter retained the ownership of his tobacco until its sale overseas and "the merchant was merely an agent acting on behalf of his [colonial] American client."\(^{20}\) The consignment system worked well for the large tobacco planter; but the smaller planter who (1) did not produce enough of the crop to fill a ship’s cargo and (2) did not have the means to hire a consignment merchant to act as his personal agent, could not benefit from or participate in the system as fully as his large-planter counterpart. With this untapped clientele in mind, the Scots remedied the small planter's problems by perfecting the store system, the method of selling tobacco with which this paper mainly deals.\(^{21}\)

The store system functioned methodologically because of the hierarchy that the tobacco lords maintained in their firms. Economic historian J.H. Soltow explains the chain of command that existed within the Scottish firms. At the top of the hierarchy was the tobacco lord who served as the chief factor. He oversaw the storekeeper who in turn supervised the clerks who, depending on the size of the store, were in charge of the manual laborers (often slaves).\(^{22}\)

The large size of the Glasgow firms enabled the rise of chain stores within the colonies. This system of business was drastically different from the system used in London that “usually consisted of individuals acting alone or in partnerships of two or, at the most, three.”\(^{23}\) The Scottish factor system drastically changed the tobacco trade in the colonies by eliminating the “independent middleman” of the consignment system.\(^{24}\)

\(^{20}\) Devine, *Tobacco Lords*, 55.

\(^{21}\) Breen, *Tobacco Culture*, 39.

\(^{22}\) Soltow, 86-87.


\(^{24}\) Ibid.,” 198.
Both the consignment system and the store system involved the use of credit. The hogshead of tobacco served as the eighteenth-century version of the charge-a-plate or credit card. In exchange for a planter’s crop, merchants extended continuing credit to planters. The store system differed from the consignment system in that it offered the opportunity for the “direct-purchase” of goods in exchange for tobacco.\textsuperscript{25} Cash payment was also given at times, but not encouraged because it did not have the same insurance of retaining its worth in an uncertain economy.\textsuperscript{26}

Debt became an ever-looming characteristic of the merchant-planter relationship necessitated by the long production-cycle of sot-weed.\textsuperscript{27} Indebtedness, however, went “against the grain” of the colonial eighteenth-century gentleman who had long prided himself in his property and his independence."\textsuperscript{28} In an effort to mask the wound, planters fostered positive business relationships with their creditors.\textsuperscript{29} In turn, the merchants, recognizing that their livelihoods often rested in the hands of the planter-patrons, sought to build good rapport with the tobacco planters in their respective districts.

In the \textit{William and Mary Quarterly} article “The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Tobacco Trade, 1707-1775” the author Jacob Price identifies the planter and merchant contract as “those material relationships which facilitated, if they did not entirely account for, the other, less material exchanges” between Scotland and America in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{30} It was vital for the factors to develop and maintain congenial relationships with their planter patrons, but they were also “advised against ‘too great an

\textsuperscript{25} Devine, \textit{Tobacco Lords}, 56.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 56.
\textsuperscript{27} Breen, \textit{Tobacco Culture}, 39.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 85. See all of Chapter 3, “Planters and Merchants: A Kind of Friendship.”
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., \textit{Tobacco Culture}, 85.
Intimacy with any' of the customers, for visiting with planters at their homes might give
them 'a pretence of taking great libertys at the Store.'"\textsuperscript{31}

On the same subject of merchant/planter relations, Soltow explains that planters, who often accused merchants of offering extremely low or unfair prices for their tobacco, maintained "gentlemen’s agreements" with merchants in order to stabilize the sot-weed prices. The fixed prices ensured that planters would know what they would receive for their crops prior to the continental market sale.\textsuperscript{32}

The Scottish traders’ rise to prominence in Virginia is a complex story.\textsuperscript{33} Early histories of Scotland over-simplified the development of the Scottish monopoly in the Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{34} Histories like John Gibson’s of 1777 painted a picture of the "'[s]o sensible'" people of Scotland who were quick to take advantage of the colonial tobacco market once Scotland was united with Great Britain in 1707.\textsuperscript{35} The fact remained to be recognized, however, that Scotland was involved in colonial trade prior to 1707; and the unification of Scotland and England in that year only legitimized Scottish presence in the American tobacco market.\textsuperscript{36} Lax enforcement of commerce laws in Scotland’s Northeastern port cities, extensive "financial and commercial facilities available at Glasgow," and "low operating costs" enabled Scotland to take hold of the colonial tobacco market at an early date.\textsuperscript{37}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{31} Soltow, 88. Here Soltow is quoting from the William Cuninghame papers. Cuninghame was a major Scottish firm and had the most stores of any Scottish firm in Virginia.
\item\textsuperscript{32} Soltow, 90.
\item\textsuperscript{33} Price, "Rise of Glasgow," 182.
\item\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 182.
\item\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 183.
\item\textsuperscript{37} Price, "Rise of Glasgow," 184 and 188-189.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
"Whether Virginians would have received greater benefits from some alternative system of marketing and credit is impossible to determine."38 However, it is evident that the merchants were a fundamental element of the colonial tobacco economy and that the planters were as dependent on their services as the merchants were dependent on the planters’ crops.39

For example, T.M. Devine examines the influence that the Scottish merchant trade with Virginia tobacco planters had on Scotland’s economy and society. Despite some contemporary perceptions of the Scottish merchant system as an unfair, selfish enterprise, the evidence shows otherwise.40

Scottish participation in the Virginia tobacco trade enabled the city of Glasgow to evolve from “an important centre of regional activity in an economy widely recognized as more primitive than its neighbour to the south... into an entrepôt of international standing with a sophisticated financial and commercial system and a vigorous urban culture.”41

The merchants employed their financial gains from the Virginia tobacco trade to better the Scottish economy, which was seemingly ignored by the British until the Crown recognized the importance of the Scottish tobacco trade.

The Glasgow merchants invested principally in land and industry. Sometimes they acquired land through marriage, but most often they gained it from their own

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38 Soltow, 97.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., 83.
41 T.M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and Their Trading Activities, c. 1740-90* (Edinburgh: Donald, 1985), v. It should be noted that this unfavorable perception of the Scottish merchant system, specifically the store system often came from disgruntled English merchants who were, in essence, the Scots’ competitors.
tobacco monies which they used to construct or purchase “handsome estates” that enabled Glasgow to boast a new and fashionable architectural façade.\textsuperscript{42}

The merchants’ industrial investments were perhaps more advantageous to their countrymen than the tobacco lords’ land ventures. Devine states the obvious but easily overlooked fact that

“[t]he Clyde tobacco trade required access to a variety of industrial producers because, put simply, the system operated by the Scots merchants involved the exchange of European consumer goods for the primary produce of Virginia and Maryland.”\textsuperscript{43}

By sinking large amounts of their tobacco trade profits into Glasgow industries, the merchants provided large numbers of the Glaswegians with jobs in Scotland’s new cotton and iron manufactories.\textsuperscript{44} Furthermore, the barter system structure of the Scottish merchant store system enabled the new Glasgow factories to have an active role in the booming tobacco trade of the 1760s when “the bulk of the articles [that the merchants] sent out to the colonies was indeed purchased north of the [English] Border.”\textsuperscript{45}

The contemporary British and American characterizations of the Scottish merchant system as a money-hungry, closed, monopolistic enterprise fails to recognize the benefits that the system provided Virginia. Although the Scottish merchants gained the upper-hand in the American tobacco trade, fervid competition characterized the relationships between the Scottish firms and factors.\textsuperscript{46} The competitive atmosphere often pitted family-run firms against one another. It was not a closed system, however. There

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{42} Devine, \textit{The Tobacco Lords}, 18-19.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 46.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 48.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 63.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 71.
\end{itemize}
was ever-increasing room for new-comers as long as they were willing to take risks.\textsuperscript{47} One Scottish scholar puts it this way:

Insolvency among established families and the very considerable rate of expansion in the colonial trades combined to loosen the bonds of any enduring monopoly and to offer openings to the ambitious… The reward for the successful was wealth on a scale never before imagined in Scotland… The main basis of [the merchants’] material success was the supremacy of the tobacco firms in the Atlantic trade.\textsuperscript{48}

The Scottish merchant system was not only a resourceful enterprise with the tobacco lords’ welfares in mind; but it was also a system that unintentionally carried financial burdens for Scotland and America. The \textit{Virginia Gazette} records one eyewitness account of the significant change that was evident in Glasgow during the third-quarter of the eighteenth century. The letter published in the Commonwealth’s colonial newspaper provided evidence that one important eighteenth-century measure of prosperity – urbanity – was being met. The author of the account stated that

“I am now returned from my excursion into Scotland, which fully answered my expectation. [T]he country between Leith and Edinburgh is covered with good houses and gardens. In short, the face of the whole country, wherever I traveled, is changed for the better.

“Glasgow is a beautiful city, and consists of most stately buildings; and throughout the country, where we saw nothing but open fields, we now see nothing but trees, hedges, and inclosures [sic]. The spirit for

\textsuperscript{47} Devine, \textit{The Tobacco Lords}, 173.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 171-173.
improvements in agriculture [sic] is indeed so very high, that many Gentlemen have already doubled, trebled, and quadrupled the value of their estates. Extensive manufactures are also carrying on every where, so that every body is employed, and places where indolence and sloth reigned, are now become the habitations of industrious [sic] and well fed people."49

The readers of this letter, including Scottish inhabitants of Virginia and the colony’s planters, could not help but think themselves indirectly responsible for this drastic change in Scotland’s landscape. After all, the Virginian tobacco market coupled with the Scots’ business ingenuity directly and indirectly enabled the growth of Scotland’s economy in the 1700s.

Thus, the tobacco trade enabled the Scottish merchants to build up their native economy while serving as a vital element of the Virginia tobacco market system.50 In many respects, the middling tobacco planters (despite some complaints) owed their colonial existence to the Scottish merchant system.

Five years after Devine’s publication on the tobacco lords, Price published a study that expanded upon his previously discussed essay. The text entitled *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade* complements Devine’s characterization of the Scottish merchants by placing the *Scottish* merchants in the historical context of the overarching *British* merchant system at work within the Chesapeake region.51

49 VG, Rind, January 12, 1769.
The Scottish merchants in general and the Scottish merchant store system in particular enabled the small planters to exist within the colonial infrastructure built around credit and debt. The tobacco planters’ reliance on the consignment system had greatly diminished by the second-quarter of the eighteenth century and had given way to the merchant system. On this topic one historian points out the following:

Such small credits to the small men of the Chesapeake interior were characteristic of the business of the Glasgow houses... Since these small men could easily throw up their tenancies and move on, such credit demanded the constant attention of the storekeeper.

The store system played a significant role in the lives of small planters. And, as noted above, the Scottish merchants superseded the English merchants in the tobacco trade because of their use of store chains. It is worth noting the element of competition between the chains of stores run by different Glasgow firms and the competitive spirit that existed between merchants within the same store system.

Partially due to the shorter and safer route from Glasgow to Virginia than the route from London to the colony, Scotland gained the upper-hand in the tobacco trade. The route from Scotland enabled merchants to receive shipments at least every six months. The 1707 Union coupled with Britain’s policy of mercantilism paved the way for the protection and growth of Scotland’s already steady – although technically

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53 Price, Capital and Credit, 6.
54 Ibid., 126.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., 195.
illegitimate – trade with the colonies. The Scottish firms’ major shipping hubs in the Glasgow transatlantic tobacco trade. Both hubs were located on the River Clyde. The ships that transported the hogsheads from colonial shores were too large and heavy to travel further inland to Glasgow proper. Instead the ships docked at Port Glasgow or at Greenock and there were disembarked of their cargoes of raw goods. Then the goods were shipped via smaller vessels to Glasgow.

The phrase “raw goods” deserves more attention. The British policy of mercantilism mandated that the Mother Country’s colonies existed with the sole purpose of growing Great Britain’s imperial wealth and militaristic power. By producing raw goods such as tobacco, the colony of Virginia partially met the crown’s requirement. The Scottish store system helped see the fulfillment of the mercantile vision by providing a means for the smaller planters to distribute their unfinished product – tobacco – in exchange for finished goods that allowed the planters to subsist within the mercantile economy.

With regard to British mercantile policy the story of Scotland is one of “the forging and expansion of the eighteenth-century empire.” The “British Empire” which rose to power and fame during the eighteenth century owed much to the Scots. One scholar notes that

[t]he new Scotland which was emerging in the later eighteenth century was grounded on the imperial project. The Scots were not only full

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58 Graham, 205.
59 Ibid., 244.
partners in this grand design but were at the very cutting edge of British
global expansion.\textsuperscript{61}

It cannot be repeated enough that Scottish merchant involvement in the colonial
tobacco market was a major reason for Scotland’s success. Although tobacco use
changed dramatically over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – snuffing
superseded pipe smoking and tobacco use evolved from mainly medicinal and habitual
into a social status indicator – demand for the sot-weed despite the form did not wane.\textsuperscript{62}
British mercantilism required the “raw” crop from the colonies. Thus, “not confined to
the changing habits of consumption…” tobacco “was… a vital element in the expansion
of European colonialism.”\textsuperscript{63} Equally important, the merchant system proved beneficial to
the colonial economy because the store system provided a means for the planters to
obtain goods that were either not available in the American colonies or were more
expensive to produce in the colonies than to import. With this last statement in mind, an
examination of the goods listed in the Glassford Records is in order.

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item 61 Devine, Scotland’s Empire, 360.
  \item 62 Ibid., 69.
  \item 63 Ibid., 69-70.
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CHAPTER II
MERCHAND RECORDS AS MATERIAL CULTURE EVIDENCE:
IDENTIFICATION OF CERAMIC TEA WARES IN THE GLASSFORD RECORDS

John Glassford and Company was one of a handful of Scottish firms that
controlled the colonial American tobacco market. By the 1770s when Scotland’s sot-
weed trade was at its peak, Glassford and Company was, according to one historian,
“[a]rguably… the most complex and highly integrated of all” the Glaswegian
companies.64 Part of its complexity lay in the fact that the firm gradually engulfed many
smaller companies, thus enabling it to exert its influence over a broad spectrum of the
colonial tobacco territory.65

The firm’s achievement was due in no small part to the establishment of the
previously explained store system – a mercantile feature never perfected by the English
merchants, but a commercial endeavor at which the Scots excelled.66 In the introduction
to the study of another Glaswegian firm, the previously mentioned Scottish scholar T.M.
Devine reiterates the importance of the store system by saying that “[i]t is generally
agreed among historians that the basis of the Scottish success lay in the development of
chains of stores by Glasgow firms in the colonies which offered goods, money and credit
to planter customers in exchange for tobacco.”67

An examination of the records maintained by John Glassford and Company
representatives who made their abodes in Virginia reveals the great variety of goods that
the merchants supplied their planter-patrons. From staple food stuffs and everyday items

64 Devine, The Tobacco Lords, 74.
65 Ibid., 74.
Scottish History Society, 1984), x.
like “hair pins” to the “best men’s felt hats” and “japanned tobacco boxes,” the Scottish merchants provided credit to their patrons that enabled the small planters to acquire daily necessities and personal accoutrements, as well as luxury items.\footnote{The John Glassford and Company Records, volumes 1-20. Library of Congress. Noted as Glassford Records from this point forward.} Offering credit to planters in order for the planters to replenish their tea stores and purchase new tea equipment was also a part of this commodity provision system.

As will be evident throughout this chapter, the Glassford Records often do not offer the researcher a complete picture of the types of ceramic tea wares exchanged for tobacco. The nature of the ledger book references is one reason that the Glassford Records appear imprecise. By design any ledger book serves a merchant or firm as a set of useful notes recording business transactions. The Glassford Records are not an exception.\footnote{It is interesting to note, however, that in other research that the author has recently conducted, there is a noticeable – perhaps even stereotypical – difference between the structure of ledger book references kept by English merchants and those kept by Scottish merchants. For example, the account books of the English firm John Norton and Sons list goods by type and in columns so that the goods are easily legible. However, the Glassford Records usually list goods in paragraph form, separated by commas and distinguished only by date and patron.}

The records are distinguished by patron and date. But the objects themselves are not grouped with any decipherable order within the date. The goods are merely separated by commas or a larger space between the cost of one good and the quantity of the next good. Furthermore, with regard to the ceramic tea wares, little detailed description is provided. The use of the word “common” to describe “1 doz common blue & white China cups” purchased on credit by one Glassford and Company patron, is actually among of the most descriptive references.\footnote{Glassford Records, Boydshole Ledger, June 8, 1769.} No doubt, the twenty-first-century researcher is not the first to be puzzled, befuddled, or frustrated at times with the Scottish
merchants’ lack of colorful adjectives. It is not surprising to find that orders were not always filled according to the merchants’ intentions for the very reason that their orders lacked specificity. Along those lines T.H. Breen states in *The Marketplace for Revolution* that “Each item generated a special market vocabulary. By the mid-eighteenth century fabrics and ceramics – two of the more popular British exports – came in a variety of colors, shapes, and designs.”71 Using the purchase of ceramics as an example, Breen goes on to explain the difficulties that arose in the ever-expanding colonial “consumer marketplace” by quoting the correspondence of one firm that “begged an American merchant to use words with greater precision.”72

One had “to describe them by round or long common Dishes for Meat, Soup Dishes, or deep Sallad or Pudding Dishes, [for] otherwise [we are] at a Loss to know what [you want].”73

Just like the interpretation hurdles which the eighteenth-century merchants, shippers, patrons, and tobacco lords had to jump, the modern researcher is confronted with similar connotation problems. However the present-day scholar fortunately has at her disposal archaeological evidence and others’ research to complement the Glassford Records. As a result, the Scottish merchants’ ledger book entries can be decoded with greater ease.

Although a variety of ceramic types are referenced in the Glassford Records, the ceramic tea wares that the merchants stocked during the mid- to late-eighteenth century fall largely into four groups – Chinese porcelain, white salt-glazed stoneware, agateware, agateware,

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid. Here Breen is quoting from a letter written by David Barclay and Sons to Mary Alexander, 10 July 1759. The reference is found in Cleary’s work “‘She Merchants’ of Colonial America,” 234.
and creamware.\textsuperscript{74} These ceramic types are further distinguished by an assortment of forms which will also be discussed.

**Chinese Porcelain**

Western exploration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries extended eastward and opened the door for trade with the “mysterious” and “exotic” Asian continent. Among the “new” goods that early Western tradesmen brought back from the East was tea, a beverage that had its origins in China – by way of India – and that had been consumed in the Orient for almost four thousand years prior to its introduction to the West.\textsuperscript{75} First prized for its medicinal qualities and gradually appreciated as a social beverage, tea carried a high price in its early years on the English market.\textsuperscript{76} The precious leaves were often stored “under lock and key” in tea chests that safeguarded the expensive beverage.\textsuperscript{77} However, as demand for the once elite beverage increased, the price gradually fell and consequently facilitated the spread of habitual tea-drinking at all social levels.\textsuperscript{78}

Along with the introduction of this exotic beverage to Western palates, was the need and desire for special tea utensils. Following in the Chinese tradition, Western trading companies imported tea bowls and pots used to serve and steep the beverage. The objects were made from another Chinese product – porcelain.

\textsuperscript{74} For a discussion of the other ceramic types that Glassford and Company offered Virginia’s tobacco planters, see Regina Lee Blaszczyk’s previously mentioned and cited article “Ceramics and the Sot-weed Factor: the China Market in a Tobacco Economy.”


\textsuperscript{76} Roth, 440.

\textsuperscript{77} Pettigrew, 92.

\textsuperscript{78} Roth, 440.
True porcelain is composed of kaolin and petunse, granite derivatives that, when combined, give the ceramic its translucence, resonance, and impermeable qualities.\textsuperscript{79} Once formed, the Chinese porcelain wares were painted with a variety of colors and sometimes gilded.\textsuperscript{80} British and European merchants to the East could even place orders for customers who wished for their coats of arms or ciphers to appear on their dishes.\textsuperscript{81} Each color required additional firings in order to make the mineral pigments adhere to the ceramic. The simplest and arguably the most popular color palette was \textit{blue and white}.\textsuperscript{82} The color blue, a cobalt derivative, was painted prior to glazing the ceramic; thus, wares with this color only required one firing. The addition of other colors mandated subsequent firings, constituting a labor-intensive process that increased the time and cost of making the objects. This is one reason, it can be surmised, that \textit{blue and white} endured into the twentieth century as a fashionable porcelain color-choice.\textsuperscript{83}

The Chinese kept the porcelain formula a secret from Westerners who, in-turn, worked painstakingly to come up with the recipe for the highly-sought-after ceramic concoction.\textsuperscript{84} What made porcelain so desirable? Among other properties, true porcelain was impervious to liquids and the high temperature at which the ceramic was fired

\textsuperscript{79} Ronald W. Fuchs II, \textit{Made in China: Chinese Porcelain from the Leo and Doris Hodroff Collection at Winterthur} (Winterthur, Delaware: Winterthur Publications, 2005), 13. From this point forward Fuchs’ publication will be cited as \textit{Made in China}.

\textsuperscript{80} The colors were derived from different mineral oxides. For example, cobalt blue, iron red, copper green, manganese purple. Ron Fuchs in his book \textit{Made in China} discusses in-depth the color sources used to decorate Chinese porcelain and the development of subsequent color palettes. Some of the colors that made up the color palettes or color families, he explains, were introduced to Asia by the West; pink and white – which characterize the \textit{famille rose} color palette – were introduced to the Chinese by Jesuit missionaries in the early eighteenth century.


\textsuperscript{82} Fuchs, 20.

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid. Fuchs explains that the Chinese first marketed \textit{blue and white} porcelain to the Middle East in the fourteenth century and that the cobalt blue-decoration was even referred to as Muhammadian blue.

\textsuperscript{84} It was not until 1708 that the German manufactory at Meissen discovered how to make hard paste porcelain in imitation of the Chinese. For more on the topic of porcelain imitation, see the Seattle University and Seattle Art Museum collaborative publication \textit{Porcelain Stories from China to Europe}. 
enabled the finished product to withstand boiling water; thus making it an ideal material from which to shape cups and pots to hold tea.  

Chinese porcelain was one of the most expensive ceramics available to colonists during in the eighteenth century. British mercantilist policies stipulated that wares made of the precious ceramic not be shipped to the colonies directly from the Orient, but transported to the colonies from Asia via the Mother Country. For British subjects abiding in the colonies after July 1, 1754, true porcelain became even less accessible when Parliament imposed upon the American colonists a tax on the Chinese ceramic ware.  

The Glassford ledger books document occasional purchases of Chinese porcelain. But of the ceramic types of which tea wares were made available to the colonists, porcelain objects constituted the smallest percentage. In the Glassford Records the researcher finds references to tea wares made of true porcelain in the phrases “China cupps,” “Blue and white China cupps,” and the previously mentioned “common blue & white China cups” (Figure 3). In all instances the term “China” harks back to the ceramic’s country of origin. Although porcelain painted in other color palettes was available to inhabitants in the colonies, the records examined for this study only revealed

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85 Litzenburg, 11.  
86 Fuchs, 26. For a discussion on Britain’s Mercantilism and Scotland’s role in the trade policy, see Graham’s *A Maritime History of Scotland 1650-1790* and Devine’s *Scotland’s Empire and the Shaping of the America’s 1600-1815*. Both authors note that as far as Great Britain’s colonies were concerned, British Mercantilist policies mandated the colonial production of raw materials – tobacco, for instance – as a means to increase Britain’s wealth and power. The unfinished goods were shipped to Britain where they were processed for domestic use and/or re-exportation. Colonial economic endeavors were supposed to be undertaken for the betterment of the Mother Country. Mercantile policy and the high cost of labor in the colonies kept Virginians and other colonists dependent upon Great Britain for many of their every-day needs and most of their desired luxury items. Graham, 182, 204-205; and Devine, *Scotland’s Empire*, 30 and 32.  
88 Glassford Records, Boydshole Ledger, April 10, 1769; June 23, 1769; June 8, 1769.
blue and white as a distinguishing phrase among the colors used to decorate the Chinese porcelain tea wares purchased by the Glassford and Company store patrons. Perhaps because the Scottish merchants most often dealt with middling planters, the references to “China Cupps” are few in comparison to other more affordable ceramic tea wares.

White Salt-Glazed Stoneware

White salt-glazed tea wares served colonial Americans as a less-costly means of drinking tea, enabling middling Virginia tobacco planters to partake of the beverage “in style” just like their big planter counterparts. Arguably made to imitate the highly regarded Chinese porcelain, white salt-glazed stoneware became a popular ceramic by the early eighteenth century. The ware was a ceramic of English origin composed of native calcined flint and white pipe-clay from which various forms were molded; placed in saggers in a kiln; and then, when the temperature reached approximately 1800°F, common salt was thrown into the kiln. “The salt split into its component elements: chlorine, which passed out of the kiln-chimney, and sodium, which combined with the silicates in the body of the ware to form a thin, glass-like glaze.”

As one author recently stated on the subject, “white salt-glazed stoneware was purely English, invented in London, appreciated throughout the country, exported abroad

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89 For a discussion of other Chinese porcelain available to colonial Americans and that has been identified archaeologically, see Ivor Noël Hume's *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America.*
90 *Glassford Records, Boydshole Ledger, June 23, 1769.*
93 Savage and Newman, 253.
in vast quantities; in short, a successful ceramic staple for three-quarters of a century.”

Since the ware could be made entirely in the Mother Country, white salt-glazed stoneware tea equipment was less expensive to import to the colonies than true porcelain. As noted above in the discussion on Chinese porcelain, the 1754 Parliamentary act did not tax British-made ceramic goods, only Chinese porcelain. According to one author this caused an increase in British ceramic manufactories’ use of chinoiserie or Chinese-style motifs and shapes as attempts to suffice the British consumers’ desires for the exotic ware (Figure 6). Moreover, the white body of white salt-glazed stoneware resembled Chinese porcelain from a distance. This was especially true of the “later salt-glazed ware of the 1750s” that was “a very light buff in colour, usually with a thin, hard glaze of a texture resembling the skin of an orange.”

The Glassford Records examined for this study provide numerous references to white salt-glazed stoneware tea utensils. The merchant ledger book entries usually denote the ware as “white stone” although there are references such as “1 stone tea Pot” which, no doubt, also referred to the material. Similarly there are references such as “1 white tea pot” which also indicates a white salt-glazed object (Figure 4).

The Glassford Records indicate that regardless of the material – porcelain, white salt-glazed stoneware, agateware, or creamware – tea cups and saucers were either ordered by the half-dozen or dozen. For example, Scottish store patron Thomas King

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94 Edwards, 48.
95 Ibid., 160.
96 Ibid., 162.
97 Ibid., 162.
98 Savage and Newman, 253.
99 Glassford Records, Boydshole Ledger, October 31, 1768.
100 Ibid., July 20, 1769.
purchased “1/2 doz white stone cups & Saucers” from the Glassford and Company Boydshole store (Figure 5).\textsuperscript{101}

Cups and saucers were not inseparable entities, however; the merchant ledger book entries often record “1/2 doz white Stone Cupps” without any mention of saucers.\textsuperscript{102} Nevertheless, it should be noted that neither white salt-glazed stoneware saucers nor porcelain saucers are recorded apart from cups.

\textbf{Agateware}

Another ceramic type noted in the Glassford Records is agateware. From a ceramic historian’s perspective agateware references carry great weight because, compared to references of other ceramics available to eighteenth-century Americans, agateware references found within an American context are infrequent.\textsuperscript{103} The ware, hence its name, was “pottery made in imitation of the hardstone agate, the veined and mottled effect being created by pressing slabs of tinted clays together, and then kneading, or wedging, slices cut transversely from the mass.”\textsuperscript{104} Due to its high firing temperature, the ceramic falls within the parameters of the \textit{stoneware} ceramic family.\textsuperscript{105}

Just as with the white salt-glazed stoneware references, it is evident from agateware references that at times the Scottish merchants’ shorthand and often insufficiently descriptive records present difficulties in the interpretation of the records.

\textsuperscript{101} Glassford Records, Boydshole Ledger, October 28, 1768.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., September 19, 1769. For a reference to a dozen cups, see the Glassford Records, Boydshole Ledger, June 8, 1769 which reads “1 doz common blue & white China cups.”
\textsuperscript{103} Janine Skerry, Curator of Ceramics at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, e-mail correspondence to the author, October 2007.
\textsuperscript{105} Savage and Newman, 276.
But, as previously noted, by using other studies to complement and enhance the documents, obscure object references can be deciphered.

For example, in a recent article on agateware production, the authors distinguish two methods employed by potters to form agateware – “thrown agate” and “laid agate.” Thrown agateware, according to the authors, “describes a vessel formed on a wheel using a prepared mixture of various colored clays.” This kind of agateware, which is distinguished by the method used to create it, is most likely the type of agateware referenced by the Glassford merchants in records noting purchases such as “agate bowl.” In *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America*, scholar and renowned archaeologist Noël Hume testifies to the presence of thrown agateware in the colonies. The author describes the composition of the clay as being a “much thicker agate ware” that “was common in the third quarter of the eighteenth century and much of it reached America.” It was made by “combining a red and a yellow clay… not always done for ornamental purposes; it could also serve to make a poor clay more workable.”

On the same subject of agateware formation, ceramic expert Robert Hunter and historical potter Michelle Erickson explain that the combination of clays for the production of thrown agateware served as a means to strengthen the clay. This explanation makes sense when one notes the types of wares – namely utilitarian – that were formed using the thrown agate method.

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107 Erickson and Hunter, 87.
108 *Glassford Records*, Boydshole Ledger, October 25, 1768.
110 Noël Hume, 132.
111 Erickson and Hunter, 91. See Figure 4 of that page for an example of a thrown agate dish.
However the agate tea wares referenced in the Glassford Records do not fall within the thrown agateware category. References such as “1 agate tea pot” and “1/2 doz agate cups & saucers” refer to wares made using a method that Erickson and Hunter term “laid agate” (Figures 7 and 8). This technique of forming agateware characterizes “an object created from a thin sheet or bat made of agate clay. This thin sheet is draped or laid in the mold and pressed into shape.” Refined objects such as the agate tea ephemera mentioned in the Glassford Records were formed by English potters who employed this technique.

Although other artisans no doubt used the same and similar ways to obtain the agate effect, the eighteenth-century potter Thomas Whieldon is usually credited with the introduction of the “laid agate” method to the British manufactory scene of the early 1750s. His 1754 partnership with the famous Josiah Wedgwood realized the further perfection of laid agateware. Even after the Whieldon-Wedgwood joint venture ceased five years later in 1759, Wedgwood continued to hone agateware technologies, looking closely at the detail of the actual agate stone as well as “antique Etruscan and Roman examples.”

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112 Glassford Records, Boydshole Ledger, June 20, 1769 and June 10, 1769. The term “laid agate” was coined by Erickson and Hunter, 87.
113 Erickson and Hunter, 87.
114 Ibid., 93. According to Erickson and Hunter, the origin of the English “laid agate” method may have its roots in China. The authors compare two Tang Dynasty, Chinese footed censers of agateware with an eighteenth-century Staffordshire agateware teapot. Not only are the laid agate clay patterns comparable; but also the globular, footed form of the English teapot is remarkably similar to the Chinese shape. Hunter and Erickson state that there is no documentation stating that the potter Thomas Whieldon obtained his ideas from Chinese prototypes. The similarity in the shapes and appearances of the Chinese sensors to the English teapot and the knowledge that other Chinese wares served as models for various Staffordshire tea ephemera suggest that English agateware potters, indeed, may have been copying Asian ceramics.
115 Ibid., 93-94.
116 Ibid., 94.
Creamware

A fourth ceramic type available to colonial Virginians via the Scottish merchant trade was *creamware*. By the end of the eighteenth century, creamware surpassed white salt-glazed stoneware in popularity among Britain’s domicile and colonial subjects. Part of this popularity was government-induced. Taxes imposed on salt, a key ingredient in the production of the previously discussed white salt-glazed wares, helped to create an artificial market for creamware. In search of ways to get around the salt duty, pottery manufactories that produced white salt-glazed stoneware looked for alternatives to that ceramic.117 Creamware was one such alternative that drew great interest from consumers.

Like white salt-glazed stoneware, creamware was made in Britain – a fact that facilitated its exportation to the American colonies. The creamware ceramic body was earthenware, hardly a novelty in the pottery world. The earthenware composition included “whitish clay from Devon which was mixed with calcined flint” that yielded a consistently white ceramic body.118 As was the case with the development of white salt-glazed stoneware, the glaze used on creamware helped define the ceramic. After all, the creamware earthen body was really the same as that of white salt-glazed stoneware; the distinguishing factor of creamware was its lead-based glaze. The lead glaze had several benefits that contributed to its popularity not only as a fashionable ceramic choice, but also as a practical one. The glaze enabled the ceramic to be fired at a much higher temperature than contemporaneously-manufactured, crude tin-glazed earthenware that

118 Savage and Newman, 88. The authors note that the white body of creamware made it “much in demand not as a substitute for porcelain, but for delftware.”
chipped and flaked easily. Consequently, the ceramic fired very hard, making it impervious to liquids; and when tea pots or cups were filled with the appropriate beverage, the creamware tea utensils easily withstood the hot liquid.

The success of the product in the British Isles and abroad owed much thanks to the great marketing techniques of Josiah Wedgwood and of his business partner and confidant Thomas Bentley. After Queen Charlotte commissioned Wedgwood to design a creamware service for her use, the ware received the Crown’s stamp of approval and Wedgwood hailed his ware “Queensware.”

Wedgwood’s astute production methods kept creamware manufacturing costs low, thereby opening the market of his royalty-endorsed tea and dinner services to all classes concerned with keeping up with the latest ceramic trend. One author put it this way:

First royalty were impressed, then nobility flattered, then the wishes of the common people to be like their betters were finally realized – each separated by the appropriate quality, decoration, forms, and hence price” of creamware.

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119 Savage and Newman, 88. The authors state that as a result of the innovative use of the lead glaze on the “cream-coloured earthenware,” potteries specializing in “tin-enamel earthenware in England successively closed” in the 1760s.


121 Savage and Newman, 88.

122 Burton, 51 and 109.

For Wedgwood, the Queen’s approval of the ceramic was “the realization of an ambition” because “[n]ow there was none who need feel ashamed if their dinner service came from humble Staffordshire...”\textsuperscript{124}

Ann Smart Martin, on what she dubs the “Creamware Revolution,” reveals that the desire for creamware tea wares in colonial America was prevalent in both urban and rural settings. That is to say that the affordable and fashionable creamware enabled the custom of drinking tea to span every societal stratum.\textsuperscript{125} Big planters like George Washington placed orders for creamware as did Virginia’s middling planters.\textsuperscript{126}

The Glassford Records of 1769 and shortly after only give the researcher a taste of the creamware market that was to follow in later years. The references to creamware tea wares that are apparent in the Glassford Records include transactions such as that of Mr. Mott Doniphan who acquired “1/2 doz cream coll’d Saucers” at the end of 1771 (Figure 9. See Figure 10 for an example of a creamware tea pot).\textsuperscript{127}

Interestingly and unlike the references to saucers made of Chinese porcelain, white salt-glazed stoneware, and agateware; the references to creamware saucers reveal that at an early date they were available to Scottish merchant patrons apart from the usual references to purchases of companion cups.

It should be noted that the Glassford Records examined around the 1769 non-importation movement do not refer to the ware by its royal name until late in 1771.

Wedgwood presented his creamware service to Queen Charlotte in 1765 and \textit{Virginia}

\textsuperscript{124} Burton, 51.
\textsuperscript{125} Martin, 173-176. The author notes on page 173 that “it took generations for porcelains to move from being the costly traditional symbol of wealth and power to a common tea and table ware. Wedgwood, however, managed to compress the whole cycle of luxury consumption in less than a decade, without losing the interest of any group.”
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 176.
\textsuperscript{127} Glassford Records, Boydshole Ledger, November 4, 1771.
Gazette advertisements did not begin to call the ware by its royal name until four years later.\textsuperscript{128} And as Martin points out, “creamware’s popularity in stores did not peak until the first half of the 1780s…”\textsuperscript{129} Nevertheless, there are references to other tea wares such as “1 queens china sugar dish” and “1 queens china milk pot.”\textsuperscript{130} Of course both of those objects, unaccompanied by an order of tea cups or a tea pot, may have been intended for use with a coffee or chocolate service. More will be discussed on this topic of alternative uses for “tea” wares in the next chapter.

The Tea Service Proper

It may be noted that the tea ware references thus far mentioned are mainly of cups and saucers and tea pots. When ceramic tea wares are considered, other objects such as the sugar and waste bowls, the milk pot, and the most obvious tea canister are also considered to be representative wares for which the researcher should peruse the Glassford Records. These other forms are mentioned in the Records, but it seems that most of them are not described or referenced as ceramic objects or, in the case of tea canisters, are rarely given a descriptive differentiator. For instance, one order in 1769 received by Thomas Porch notes his purchase of “1/2 doz China Cupps” in addition to “1 glass sugar dish”.\textsuperscript{131} Thus, the forms were being purchased, but not always out of the same material as the cups and saucers.

The term “tea service” and “tea set” also come to mind. On this subject author and tea scholar Jane Pettigrew states that

\textsuperscript{128} Martin, 175.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 177.
\textsuperscript{130} Glassford Records, Boydshole Ledger, November 11, 1771.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., September 1763.
Matching sets of tea wares began to arrive [Great Britain] in large numbers in the 1770s. In 1775, the East India Company ordered '80 tea sets' with their order for 1,200 teapots, 2000 covered sugar bowls, 4000 milk pots, 48,000 cups and saucers. These were often referred to as 'breakfast sets' and comprised a teapot, a sugar box with a cover and a plate for it to stand on, a milk pot, and twelve cups (still without handles) and saucers.\(^\text{132}\)

The Glassford Records perused for this study are at the beginning of the popularity of ordering matching tea services. This is not to say that the other forms were not available to colonists in the ceramic of their choice (Figures 11 and 12), but the Records do provide support for Pettigrew's argument that matching tea services did not "catch on" until the 1770s.

Perhaps a more important point to make in relation to this study, matching tea or breakfast services were first available to the elite residents of the American colonies.\(^\text{133}\)

Thus, the middling planters to whom the Scottish merchants catered did not necessarily have the means to purchase elaborate or large services. At the same time, the presence of orders for various ceramic tea cups and saucers and tea pots is sufficient to illustrate that these middling planters were not to be left behind in the custom of tea drinking.

\(^\text{132}\) Pettigrew, 81.
\(^\text{133}\) Roth, 450. Here Roth references an extensively large tea service in a late 1740s probate inventory of a Bostonian gentleman.
CHAPTER III

SOME EFFECTS OF THE NON-IMPORTATION MOVEMENT:

WHAT INSIGHT DO THE GLASSFORD RECORDS PROVIDE?

Having identified the ceramic tea ware types ordered by Glassford and Company patrons amidst the early boycotts of British goods, what can be said as to the value of having identified the wares? The material culture evidence found in the Glassford Records helps to paint a more complete picture of the non-importation Associations’ lack of success at an early date. Furthermore, the Glassford Records reveal the difficult scenario in which the merchants found themselves when figuratively caught between the decision to fulfill their patrons’ wishes or to abide by the Associators’ restrictions on imported goods.

With regard to the non-importation movement and the boycott on tea, the tea ware references in the Glassford Records reveal at least two noteworthy observations: (1) they provide evidence for the continual use of tea and, subsequently, the permanence of the tea-taking ritual among Virginia’s inhabitants and (2) they give credence to an obvious although easily overlooked argument that tea wares were not always used as wares from which to consume the imported teas.

Colonial Evidence of a Banned Good

Drawing from the Glassford and Company ledgers, in the previous chapter four types of ceramic tea wares were identified as having been purchased by Glassford merchant patrons. In addition to records of tea ware purchases, the researcher finds orders for green and bohea teas alongside many of the ledger entries for tea wares. For

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instance, listed with “1 white tea pot” an order is placed by one Glassford and Company patron for “bohea Tea.” And another order references “Bohea Tea” with a purchase of “1/2 doz Blue & white China Cupps.”

The existence of even one order of tea within the timeframe of the early non-importation Associations illustrates the lack of boycott participation alluded to by the writers of the previously mentioned letter that appeared in the 1771 issue of the Virginia Gazette. The letter’s under-signers brought to the attention of their “public-at-large” readers that the Association-inspired boycotts of sundry British goods failed, in part, because only a handful of merchants stocked their stores within the parameters set by the non-importation Associations.

Alternate Uses for Ceramic Tea Wares

As previously noted the Townshend Duties, imposed upon the American colonists by the British Parliament in the summer of 1767, included a tax on tea. Incensed by these duties and spurred on by Patrick Henry’s fervent speeches that condemned Parliament’s actions, the colonists of Virginia did not as a whole accept the tea tax. The establishment of non-importation Associations gave witness to such dissent. As already mentioned, the associations helped organize boycotts of imported and taxed British commodities. Tea drinking, however, was a cultural practice – a ritual, if you will – from which American British subjects had difficulty refraining, even if only for a short period of time. How could the public be convinced to forego the custom of drinking tea? What

\[^{134}\text{Glassford Records, Boydshole Ledger, July 20, 1769.}\]
\[^{135}\text{Ibid., April 10, 1769.}\]
\[^{137}\text{Rhys Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia: 1740-1790 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 244.}\]
could displace the habit? In the time of turmoil created by the Townsend Duties, articles and advertisements published in the *Virginia Gazette* addressed these questions. An examination of the *Gazette* reveals how the paper encouraged the sale and use of tea alternatives while frequently appealing to a growing sense of “American” patriotism among its readers.

Substitutes for tea are first mentioned in Purdie and Dixon’s November 1767 edition of the *Virginia Gazette*. Published within the first few months after the Townsend Acts were passed, the *Gazette* printed a column of Bostonian news from earlier in November of the same year. It stated the following:

“There is a certain herb, lately found in this province, which begins already to take place in the room of Green and Bohea tea, which is said to be of a very salutary nature, as well as a more agreeable flavour. It is called Labrador.”

The announcement made the point that colonial American tea drinkers could find within their own continent a palatable alternative to the frequently imported green and bohea teas. In order to grasp the full story, however, the reader must skim the column and pay attention to the third snippet of news that the paper relayed. “We are assured from good authority that many of the Ladies of this town have said that in the list of articles not to be purchased TEA ought by no means to have been omitted, and that they are resolved to omit the use of it for the future.”

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138 *VG*, Purdie and Dixon, November 26, 1767, 2.
139 Ibid.
The Bostonian “Ladies” determined to add “TEA” to the enumeration of goods from which they abstained. However, from the newsbyte it can be inferred that tea was not on every boycott list in 1767. With regard to the colony of Virginia, the Glassford Records provide definite proof of this assumption.

As already noted, amidst the early Virginia non-importation movements the ledger books maintained by the Scottish firm reveal countless purchases of green and bohea tea. But what can be surmised about those orders for tea wares that did not include purchases of either green or bohea teas? The *Virginia Gazette*’s introduction of the herb Labradorre followed by the Bostonian women’s statement to boycott tea provided the eighteenth-century *Gazette* reader with an alternative to purchasing the good and evidence that others already had discontinued its use.

Some “tea” wares also may have been used to serve beverages other than imported tea or the above mentioned “native” tea-substitutes available within the colonies. For example, one order of “1/2 doz China Cupps” also includes “1 Coffee Pott.” Additionally, the Glassford Records reveal occasional references to chocolate wares used to serve that beverage. One order reads “1 Queen’s ware Chocolate pot;” and another order references the availability of *chocolate* from Philadelphia.

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140 *VG*, Purdie and Dixon, November 26, 1767, 2.
141 Glassford Records, Boydshole Ledger, September 1769.
142 Ibid., December 14, 1771.
CONCLUSION

Harkening back to the *Virginia Gazette* issue which opened this essay, it is worth noting a second part of the letter in which the “Associators” mentioned that they had withheld several goods that came across the Atlantic via the Scottish merchant trade because the items were not “in every respect agreeable to the association.” Instead of being delivered to the Scottish stores or merchants, those “articles contrary to association” were “deliver[ed]… up to be stored.” That is to say that the goods were not returned to the Mother Country, nor were they destroyed. This is worth noting because it provides evidence for the argument that the bans on British imports were never intended to be permanent prohibitions.

Although perhaps obvious, it is important to recognize that a boycott is a temporary ban which, when implemented successfully, is used by one group as a means to convey disgruntlement to another party or individual. Arguably the organizers of the early non-importation associations in Virginia had no intention of permanently forbidding the importation of *any* British good. If such had been the case, why permit a good to be stored?

This point is significant in that it helps to answer the question posed at the beginning of this study – How did the 1769 establishment of non-importation associations affect the Scottish merchant importation of ceramic tea wares to Virginia? Put simply, the early colonial boycotts did not successfully impede the importation of ceramic tea wares. The examination of the Glassford Records and the orders that the merchants filled provides fundamental proof of that fact. But as noted earlier, trade is not

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143 *VG*, Rind, July 18, 1771.
144 Ibid.
a one-way road and the merchants sought to satisfy their patrons’ wishes. The Scottish merchant trade developed as a succession of transatlantic and colonial relationships between the Glaswegian-based firms, the chains of stores operated by merchants within the colonies and the tobacco-planter patrons who supplied the agricultural-form of capital that helped Scotland make a name for itself as an important player in the British Empire’s mercantile economy and enabled Virginia’s middling tobacco farmers to obtain goods necessary for and superfluous to their livelihood. The examination of the material culture – in this case ceramic tea wares – recorded by the Glassford firm’s credit transactions in Virginia further documents the lack of support for the early non-importation movement in Virginia and illustrates more fully the importance of the tea-taking tradition in the colonies.

As with many studies, the research undertaken for this paper raised even more questions than it answered. The authors of the 1771 letter published in Rind’s *Virginia Gazette* exonerate two merchants for their endeavors to order cargoes “perfectly conformable to the association” and, hence, stock their stores accordingly.\(^{145}\) As noted at the beginning of this text, one of the merchants operated a store at Colchester, Virginia, under the direction of Glassford and Company. It is interesting to note that despite the element of competition that existed between the stores there are instances recorded in the Glassford ledger books in which one merchant sends an order of goods to another store. One example is an order of goods sent from the Boydshole store to the Colchester store. This reference raises significant questions as to the validity of the exoneration that the Colchester merchant received from the non-importation association supporters. What goods did the merchant receive from the Boydshole store? Did the order(s) include tea

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\(^{145}\) *VG*, Rind, July 18, 1771.
wares or, more significantly, tea? Put another way, did the Colchester merchant really offer his patrons goods that were sanctioned by the non-importation movement or did the orders he received from the Boydshole store broaden his inventory? And did the trade between stores enable the Colchester merchant to evade the non-importation regulations? It may not be possible to answer such questions since the Boydshole ledger book notes only in general terms that goods were sent to the Colchester store; but only further research will tell.

What this study of the Glassford Records does confirm is the lack of middling-planter support for the early non-importation movement. Moreover, it reveals that by the 1760s tea-drinking – once a custom of the colonial elite – had become an integral part of life for members of the less-affluent households in Virginia. By catering to their patrons’ wishes, the Scottish merchants and the store system enabled the small Virginia planters to fulfill their consumer needs and wishes despite the organization of boycotts.
APPENDIX

FIGURE 3

FIGURE 4


FIGURE 5

White Salt-Glazed Stoneware Cup and Saucer, circa 1740-60. Courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.
FIGURE 6

Enameled White Salt-Glazed Stoneware Tea Pot with Chinese-Style Decoration, circa 1760. Courtesy of the Chipstone Foundation.
FIGURE 7

Agateware Tea Pot, circa 1755-75.
Courtesy of the Chipstone Foundation.

FIGURE 8

Agateware Cup, circa 1745.
Courtesy of the Chipstone Foundation.
FIGURE 9

Creamware Cup and Saucer, circa 1775.
Courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

FIGURE 10

Creamware Tea Pot, circa 1770-80.
Courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.
FIGURE 11

White Salt-Glazed Stoneware Sugar Bowl with Cover, circa 1760.
Courtesy of the Chipstone Foundation.

FIGURE 12

Agateware Milk Pot, circa 1750-75.
Courtesy of the Chipstone Foundation.
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