



Transfer Print *Earthenwares* from Cocumscussoc

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The plates illustrate patterns found on sherds of transfer print earthenware excavated from the grounds of Smith's Castle. Bottom to top: Blue Willow, brown transfer Romance scene on ivory body, light blue Canova pattern, and flow blue. All date to the 19th century.

The site of Cocumscussoc, also known as Smith's Castle is located in the town of Wickford, R.I. This site, which has gone from trading post to plantation to dairy farm, was excavated in 1972–73 by John Senulus of the University of Rhode Island and in 1989–1994 by a team from Brown University. These digs uncovered four centuries worth of artifacts, among them 313 sherds of transfer print earthenware. These pieces began as dinner and tea sets in England, were shipped to the United States throughout the nineteenth century, and found their way to the tables and cupboards of Americans of various economic classes. These particular dishes eventually made their way to the yard, where they were broken into very small pieces, probably due to their use in landscaping, as mentioned in the 1991 site report.

The transfer printed earthenwares found at this site were pearlware and hard white, pastes whose development took years of science and refinement in England. The Wedgwood firm defines pearlware as “a white earthenware body containing a greater percentage of flint and white clay than cream-coloured earthenware. A small amount of cobalt was added to the glaze for a still further whitening effect” (Hughes 1959: 24). Wedgwood in 1779 was using Cornish china-clay and china-stone to improve existing earthenwares. Pearlwares were used and refined in different ways by different potters. The Davenport firm in 1860 was advertising “the hardest and most durable earthenware in white granite.” This was the final phase of pearlware and was made by hundreds of potters from the 1840s (Hughes 1959: 26). According to Noël Hume (1969: 130–1), “by 1820, pearlware was on its way out, being superseded by various forms of hard white wares and semiporcelain that are extremely difficult to date with accuracy.”

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Castle Chronicle is published quarterly by the Cocumscussoc Association at Smith's Castle

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smithscastle.org

Subscriptions are by Smith's Castle membership only, beginning at \$25.

The views expressed by contributors to *Castle Chronicle* are not necessarily those of the Cocumscussoc Association.



Note from the President

Smith's Castle thrives on its members, who drive our programming, staff our committees, and fund our operations.

Because of a confluence of events—a change in leadership, the loss of a resident director, and the switch to new software—many membership renewal notices that were supposed to be sent in April never made it to our members.

If you have not yet renewed your membership, in the coming weeks you will receive a renewal notice. Please renew as soon as you can. Your membership is vital to the Castle. In addition to funding operational costs, it directly pays for this newsletter, which is not only a primary tool for communicating with our members but also for getting the message out to business, community, and state organizations on the many ways Smith's Castle is fulfilling its historic preservation and education mission. Moreover, membership numbers reflect our relevance to the community and are an important factor considered by grant-making organizations in identifying worthy recipients. Your membership truly counts at Smith's Castle.

If you have renewed but still receive a renewal notice, please let us know immediately by calling the Castle at 294-3521 or emailing us at smithscastle@earthlink.net.

For those of you who are members but are not active volunteers, why not consider helping out at one of our events or working on one of our committees. Smith's Castle's corps of volunteers reported 5,400 hours of time spent on behalf of the Castle in 2005. And these were enjoyable hours! At the Castle you will find a welcoming, nurturing, and fun environment.

Sometimes people don't volunteer because they doubt they have any special skills to offer. We look only for energy and enthusiasm. Everything else can be learned, and our volunteers are great teachers! Another excuse is lack of time. No problem—you can volunteer an hour a month, an hour a week, or an hour a day if you want. If you have a little time and a lot of interest, we can find the right job for you.

We are currently seeking volunteers in the following areas:

Administrative work and office staff

Buildings and maintenance

Chronicle newsletter (writing, editing, mailing)

Collections

Docents (full recruitment begins next spring)

Event planning

Youth Education (both in-school and on-site)

Adult Education (seminars and special tours)

Grants and fundraising

Grounds and gardens

Marketing and public relations

Membership

Site committee (cultural landscape report)

Reluctant to commit? Why not take a test drive and volunteer for the day at our upcoming Harvest Festival on Saturday, October 14. We will be looking for all hands on deck to help with this fun and educational Smith's Castle tradition.

Contact the Castle for more information. I look forward to working with you!


—Neil Dunay, President

Welcome New Members

Alex Anderson

Richard Burda & family

Sue Gould & Warren Trafton

Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy Martin

Robert & Laura Petix

Richard Rupp & family

Mr. & Mrs. Seth Schartner

Stanley Spink & family

—as of 8/31/06

Please Remember the Castle in Your Estate Planning

One part of planning your estate intelligently includes maximizing the taxes you save and potentially increasing the dollars you give. Does charitable giving play a part in your retirement's financial plans?

Many individuals would prefer to see IRA assets go to charity than to see their retirement savings reduced by taxes. Proper estate planning can reduce or eliminate estate taxes, leaving more for heirs. Did you know:

- IRA beneficiaries may be burdened with up to four taxes (federal estate tax, state inheritance tax, and federal and state income taxes)?
- Withdrawals from an inherited IRA are taxed as ordinary income?
- Heirs may be better off receiving stocks or mutual funds held outside an IRA since stocks or bonds may receive a step up in cost basis?

By naming a public charity as beneficiary to IRA assets, you can reduce or potentially eliminate estate taxes and spare heirs from future tax associated with required IRA withdrawals. ■

—Fidelity Investments, *Charitable Giving and Estate Planning*.

Upcoming Events

Harvest Festival

Fall is approaching and that means it's time for Smith's Castle's colonial Harvest Festival. This fun and educational event will recreate the sights, sounds, and smells of the harvest celebrations that occurred on the Updike farms during the 18th century.

Costumed interpreters will demonstrate colonial crafts and customs. Activities will include felting, dipping candles, making johnnycakes, putting the gardens to bed, and cooking outdoors over an open fire.

Demonstrations will include colonial tools and the colonial professions they represent, johnnycake preparation, and a forge demonstration. Also, the Rhode Island Genealogical Society will be on hand to help out with questions regarding 18th century Rhode Island genealogy.

Children will enjoy a penmanship and slate work table, a presentation of beaver teeth and pelts (as well as

pelts from other animals), a puzzle seek-and-find page, a revolutionary drill sergeant to put them through their paces, and a paper corn-husk doll project. Other colonial games and activities will include hoops, stilts, and "quilting" activity with premade, magnetized quilting squares.

Colonial and modern delectables will include pumpkins, honey, cider, apple crisp, old-fashioned candy, baked goods, and frogger cookies.

Colonial musical entertainment will be provided. And we may receive a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Paul Revere. ■

October 14, Noon–4:00 p.m.

Rain date October 15

Admission. \$3.00, children under 12, free

Family of four, \$10.00



Recent Events

Brunch by the Bay

After a weather-related postponement, it was well worth waiting another week for Brunch by the Bay. More than 60 people attended the event at the Wickford Yacht Club on August 27, with entertainment provided by the ROMPS (Retired Old Men Playing Swing), omelettes prepared exhibition-style, and delectable sides and desserts. "It takes a lot of good people to pull something like this off," one organizer

observed. Indeed it does! Many thanks to Betsy Steinman, Jackie Gildersleeve, Paul Christiansen, Paul Marshall, Ann Waring, Linda Tammaro, Bonnie Leonard, Frank Boffi, Dick and Ann Bowen, Pam Dumas, Carol Palmer, Barry and Donna Dufault, Joyce Fuller and Ed Swirka, Grace Palmer, and Gillian Cook. Also thanks to our donors: Dave's Marketplace, The Home Depot, Majik Coffee, Sam's Club, and Wal-Mart. ■

Photos by Karen
and Pete Pizzarusio.



Strawberry Festival



Photos by
Karen Pizzarusi.

Recent Events

Traveling from Castle to Fort

Adventures of Smith's Castle's Roaming Ambassadors



Front facade of Old Fort Johnson. Photo by Diane Ameral.

As the calendar turned over to January 2006, Castle docents Louise Duckworth, Dianne McGowan, and Mary Nunes made their way to an 18th Century Winter Women's Weekend in Deerfield, Mass. While learning about everything from painted floorcloths to netting for fashion and fishing, the docents shared stories and knowledge with the other participants who came from as far away as Canada, the New England states, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. These Mid-Atlantic ladies kept mentioning a wonderful site, Old Fort Johnson in Amsterdam, New York where they would be meeting again in July for the Fort's Colonial Days.

Upon our return home, we decided to make plans to attend Old Fort Johnson's Colonial Days as well. It was time to try our hand at 18th Century camping. As spring approached, Mary Nunes planted flax both at Smith's Castle and on her own property to insure a good crop for the "Flax to Frock" textile demonstration she had offered to Old Fort Johnson. Dianne

McGowan attended the annual Sheep Shearing Day at Watson Farm in Jamestown, R.I. to purchase a fleece for her demonstration of "Sheep to Shawl".

The Fort was warm and welcoming to us and they were excited to have a hands-on textile demonstration of Linen and Wool to enhance the Woven Coverlet exhibit they had planned for July. Louise Duckworth was ready to be our camp guide and looked forward to learning all she could about the Fort's outside Bake Oven. The Castle's Cooking Committee has raised funds to build one on our grounds. Diane Ameral was going to add her effervescent personality for all the children who would visit with us. Hopes were high and the weather forecast looked pretty good as we set out west to Amsterdam.

We set up camp in good time and all slept well on Friday night, our first night in our 18th century camp. Saturday dawned gray but no one was talking about rain. Sutlers were busy putting out their wares and we set to work with our display and equipment. Out

Diane Ameral, Dianne McGowan, and Mary Nunes (l. to r.) toast their hosts in appreciation of the fine meal prepared for them by Old Fort Johnson volunteers. Photo by Louise Duckworth.



came the spinning wheels, fleece, flax, woven goods, natural dye samples and spun skeins of wool and linen. Dianne McGowan was given a private tour of the Fort's extensive gardens and told to pick anything she would like to use for her dye samples. We were also given a private tour of the Georgian house and marveled at the similarities to our Castle.

Just as the Fort was about to open for the day, the skies opened up as well. To say it poured would be putting it mildly. Three inches of rain fell from 10:00 am until about 6:00 pm. We had to scurry to break down our display and find places to put everything. Have I mentioned Old Fort Johnson's biggest claim to fame? They have a fully restored privy with clear documentation that "George Washington sat here." The privy was located on our camp site and it became our warehouse during the downpour. Diane and Dianne also sat in there later in the evening, once the rain had stopped and a light mist was falling. They spooked a few unsuspecting reenactors who passed by in the dark. What's camp without a few high jinx?

The great rain did not dampen our spirits and we created a ladies sewing circle in my tent. We had a view of the grounds, gardens, bake oven, which kept

right on baking throughout the entire day and we even had some visitors pop in. The tent stayed put, though it needed a few extra reinforcement ropes. By 6:00 p.m. the rain had stopped and dinner was served by the wonderful volunteers from Old Fort Johnson. That evening allowed us a chance to visit the other reenactors and to admire some of their camps. We were the country bumpkins compared to the "Baron" and his elegant portrayal.

Sunday was a picture perfect day and the crowds were steady all day until 5:00 p.m. We had a lovely day interacting with everyone and spreading the news about Smith's Castle to those who visit New England. We broke camp and headed for our hotel rooms in Amsterdam. We had great weather on Monday for our return trip home and we detoured to Fort Ticonderoga in the morning before heading back. As with every trip taken, we met great people, saw amazing sights, learned to pack efficiently, and had a wonderful time. We all gleaned a few ideas that we will bring back to the Castle and we have made some new friends at Old Fort Johnson, please visit them if you ever travel to Amsterdam! ■

—Mary Nunes



Fife players warm up at Fort Ticonderoga. Photo by Louise Duckworth.

The walled "King's Garden" in front of the Pell summer home at Fort Ticonderoga. Photo by Louise Duckworth.

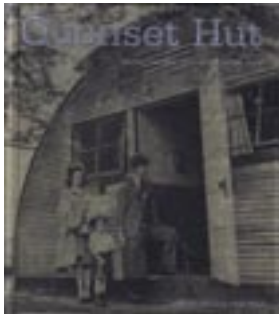


Mary Nunes flax to linen demonstration (left) and Dianne McGowan's wool spinning display were both very well received. Photos by Louise Duckworth.

Recommended Reading

Quonset Hut: Metal Living for the Modern Age

By Chris Chiel and Julie Decker
Princeton Architectural Press. 2005
Hardcover, 166 pages



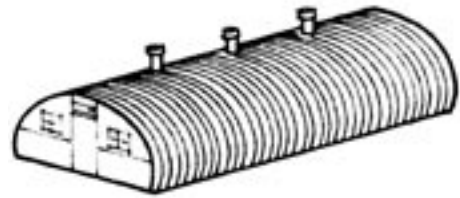
Americans have a love/hate relationship with Quonset Huts. Some praise the huts as evidence of the “can-do” ingenuity of World War II, while others, including some planners, architects, and zoning officials condemn them as rusting eyesores. This book represents the first attempt to document the history of the Rhode Island born Quonset. Originating during WWII to solve the need for an inexpensive portable structure, it survived to alleviate the postwar housing shortage and even inspired architectural styles into the 1960s.

Temporary housing has a long history dating back to the dwellings of nomadic tribes and reaching to the igloos of the Arctic. With the passage of the Lend-Lease Act of 1941, the need for quickly built and erected portable structures became evident, especially after Great Britain transferred properties in Scotland and Northern Ireland for the United States to use as bases. The Navy requested a prefabricated hut system to shelter troops.

A factory was located outside the existing naval base at Quonset near the rail line in West Davisville. Inspired by the Nissen Bow hut used by the British during World War I, the designers came up with the T-Rib Quonset, which could be adapted to different climates by adding overhangs or increasing the vents. Variations in the design meant that the huts could be utilized as laundries, hospital wards, morgues, and offices, as well as barracks. The Quonset married traditional housing forms of nomadic people with modern advances in technology and materials. A few months later the T-Rib was redesigned using the same basic footprint of the 16 by 36 foot structure, but incorporating a segmented arch with four-foot vertical sidewalls. It was renamed the Quonset. At a cost of \$1,300 per hut, in December 1941 the Navy requested a total of 25,000 be built and a second plant was opened in Davisville. In all, 32,352 huts were built in Rhode Island resulting in the employment of over 3,000 workers.

Stan-Steel, a subsidiary of the Great Lakes Steel Corporation, which produced the framing for the first structures, eventually took over the entire production and reverted back to the full arch of the T-Rib Quonset. Over 120,000 of this type were built in its factories, which were scattered throughout the nation. Less than 10 men using only hand tools could set up a Quonset in only one day.

Quonset Hut—T-Rib
16' x 36' and 16' x 20'



The original Quonset Hut, which came to be known as the T-Rib Quonset, was developed in response to the Navy's desire to produce a new prefabricated hut system during World War II to shelter troops abroad. At Quonset Point, George A. Fuller and his design team, under the direction of Otto Brandenburger, created the T-Rib Quonset, an adaptable building for mass production that would be portable, erected and knocked down quickly, and easily, adaptable to any climate and geography, and provide soldiers with the most protection and comfort possible.

By December 1941, realizing that they could not safely send civilian contractors into war zones, the Navy formed its own construction battalion (CB) nicknamed the “Seabees” with the motto “We Build, We Fight.” Recruited mainly from the building trades, the Seabees were trained at Quonset and assigned the task of erecting Quonset huts throughout the world.

The book devotes an entire chapter to Quonset huts in Alaska. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Alaska, because of its strategic importance, was placed on a war footing and almost 30,000 huts were erected in the territory. The authors concluded that Alaska could not have been defended in the war without the use of Quonsets, as the temporary tents that prevailed before the huts, did not give sufficient protection. Many of the state's Quonsets survive today as restaurants, churches, homes, schools, and meeting halls.

Construction techniques developed during the war that were later adapted to peacetime use (especially in prefabricated buildings) are also explored in the book. Two years before the end of the war, the magazine *Art and Architecture* urged its readers to keep an open mind on the Quonset as it could help alleviate the postwar housing shortage.

Quonsets were used to solve many of the nation's postwar problems. Settlements comprised of the huts were established in communities from Manhattan to Los Angeles. They also were used to shelter people made homeless by natural disasters such as the Texas City Fire in 1947. Yale University used Quonsets to house their soaring enrollment due to the GI Bill. Today they dot the landscape of the world as barns, car dealerships, fallout shelters, recording studios, churches, gymnasiums, museums, and even a Trappist monastery. Former president Gerald Ford used a Quonset for his headquarters in his first congressional campaign in 1948. With its low cost and quick assembly, the Quonset has served to house start-up ventures of all sorts. The first semiconductor company that started what would later develop into the Silicon Valley was born in a Quonset hut.

By the 1960s Quonsets on college campuses became a source of embarrassment and were replaced by tradi-

tional buildings. Consumers preferred suburban mass housing with a neocolonial face, such as Levittown, to the streamlined forms of the huts. But in spite of our changing tastes, the authors remind us that the Quonset, like the Coke bottle and the jeep, is part of our heritage. Some have been left to deteriorate as eyesores on the landscape, while others have been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. Quonset Huts linger on as a symbol of American ingenuity, especially in wartime.

This book should be of interest to anyone studying historical architecture. The authors, one a professional architect and the other a writer and graphic designer, spent eight years meticulously researching the subject. The numerous photos, many in color, are worth the price of the book. Although the print is quite small, it is readable. As many of the Castle's members live in or near North Kingstown, this history of Quonset huts should prove to be of particular interest. ■

—Norma LaSalle



The Quonset hut factory at Quonset Point, ca. 1942.



Corrugated metal (left) is run through rollers at the factory for use on T-Rib Quonset huts. Davisville, R.I., ca. 1941.

Factory workers and engineers test build a T-Rib Quonset hut. Davisville, R.I., ca. 1941.

Earthenwares (from page 1)

Figure 1. Blue Willow. Top left, c-409-3. Top right, 73-321. Bottom, c-518-3 and c-518-2. Catalog listing, p. 14, E1 and E2.



Figure 2. Light Blue Romance Scene, c-514-3. Catalog listing, p. 14, C6.



Prior to the 1750s, all wares were hand painted (Moore: 1903, Samford: 1997). Early efforts were done with overglaze or bat printing, meaning the transferred design was applied after the vessel had been glazed. Designs were engraved on copper plates to which linseed oil was applied. The excess oil was wiped away so that it only settled in the engraved lines. The oil was transferred to a thin sheet, or bat, of glue that was then applied to the glazed pottery, leaving behind the oil. Powdered enamels were dusted onto the oil, superfluous color removed with cotton wool, and the vessel placed in the kiln and fired at a low temperature (Samford 1997: 2, Moore 1903: 144). This process allowed for sharper lines because the design was not glazed over, but the design often wore off quicker. The best colors for the process were black, red, chocolate brown, and purple. The few overglaze sherds that are in the Cocumscussoc sample are black.

Underglaze, or hot process, was attempted in 1780 by Thomas Turner, and then was rapidly adopted by other Staffordshire potters. For this method, designs were engraved onto copper plates, which were then heated to thin and spread the ink. The plates were inked with a thick mixture of boiled linseed oil, powdered flint, and a coloring agent. Excess ink was removed from the copper plate, leaving color only in the engraved areas. Dampened tissue paper was placed over the copper plate and the inked design was then transferred by passing the plate and paper through the rollers of a press. After being lifted from the copper plate, the tissue paper was cut apart if necessary and

pressed ink-side down to a biscuit-fired unglazed vessel, which absorbed the ink. The vessel was then fired at a low temperature to burn off the oil and set the color, and was then dipped into a liquid glaze and refired in a glost oven (Samford 1997: 3, Hayden 1912: 325). Only blue, and to some extent black, could survive the process without discoloring at first, so these were the popular colors. Green, purple, brown, red, and maroon soon followed them, although none surpassed blue in popularity.

Transfer print wares were popular because the English were desirous of owning expensive Chinese porcelains, but most could only afford tin glazed earthenware with some hand painting. Transfer print on white earthenware became more cost efficient. In the late 18th and early 19th century there were a limited number of factories producing printed ware, so they were much more expensive than undecorated ware, but still less expensive than imported porcelain. In the 1790s, transfer print ware was three to five times the cost of undecorated ware. But by the mid 19th century, after the technique had caught on in a wide variety of factories, the price had dropped to within one to two times the cost of undecorated ware. Transfer print ware appears in great numbers in the United States after the War of 1812, due to a fall in ceramic prices. While at first they were only affordable to the rich, by 1842 a group of New York pottery dealers felt that they were now so inexpensive they were within reach of the poorest. Almost 43 percent of the plates and soup plates ordered by New York merchants between 1838 and 1840 were printed (Samford 1997: 3-4).



Figure 3. Canova Urn, c-55-3. Catalog listing, p. 14, C1.



Figure 4. Vignette Border from Canova Pattern. Left, ri375n500e615co12 and c-518-3. Center, c-517-3. Right, c-403-3. Catalog listing, p. 14, C1.

Cocumscussoc Transfer Print Earthenwares

As previously mentioned, most of the sherds of transfer print earthenwares found at Cocumscussoc are very small, but some sherds were fortunate enough to survive in large enough pieces to tell us something about their original vessels.

Blue Willow. Of the 313 sherds found scattered about the site, the majority (133) belonged to the Blue Willow pattern, an imitation of a Chinese style scene whose invention is attributed in some places to Josiah Spode in 1790 (Samford 1997), Thomas Turner of Caughley in 1780 (Hayden 1912: 320 and Hughes 1959: 29), or Thomas Milton at Chaughley (Hume 1969: 130). Original inventor notwithstanding, Blue Willow was made by dozens if not hundreds of factories and is still popular today. The Cocumscussoc collection has a fragment of a center piece which depicts a pagoda with trees (fig. 1). There are also fragments of a lattice work border that may have belonged to the same plate as the center piece. The peak range of production for Blue Willow on pearlware was between 1797 and 1814, as disenchantment with Chinoiserie occurred mid-century, only to arise again toward the end of the century (Samford 1997: 8). This is probably the earliest transfer print ware from this site.

Light Blue Romance Scene on Hard White

In the early 19th century it was popular for potters to take illustrations of British and American scenes from books and transfer them onto their wares. These scenes varied from famous landscapes to well-know build-

ings. The Copyright Act of 1842 made it illegal to copy book illustrations, pushing engravers to create more imaginative scenes. This, combined with the Romantic movement which influenced music, art, literature, and social thought throughout Europe, led to designs like the one we see in figure 2. Romantic landscapes often had a stylized building in the background, a body of water in the mid ground, and people in the foreground. These remained popular throughout the 19th century, with a peak of production from 1831–1851 (Samford 1997: 14). On the back of this particular piece are the letters AU from the end of a word, perhaps “chateau.” Hughes (1959: 28) writes that “on the backs...titles were frequently supplied, giving details both of the series and of the individual picture—but unfortunately not by any means always of the maker.” The light blue color was most popular in the years 1833–1848 (Samford 1997: 20) dating this piece probably to the 1840s. The building depicted in figure 8 may be from the scenic period prior to the Copyright Act, or due to its lack of precise detail, as well as the ambiguous buildings behind it, may also belong to this Romantic period.

Canova Plate. In addition to Romantic, another style that became popular in the early 19th century was the Classical style, characterized by urns, columned temples, and other Greek elements. A popular Classical pattern was “Canova,” named after Italian sculptor Antonio Canova (1757–1822) who was popular in England and, according to legend, had

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Earthenwares (from page 11)

Figure 5. Flow Blue Saucer. Left fragment, c-512-3 (x3) glued to c-512-2. Right, c-512-3 (x6) glued to c-512-3 (x16) and c-513-2. Radius of saucer is 8 cm. Catalog listing, p. 14, D1.



Figure 6. Brown Transfer on Ivory Body. Left, c-517-4. Right, c-404-3, c-404-a, c-404-a, c-404-2-ab, c-404-3, sn540eg10ab3, ri375n5540610 glued together. Catalog listing, p. 14, A2.



his heart placed in a neoclassical urn after his death. The Canova Pattern featuring an urn was popular between 1827 and 1847 (Samford 1997: 13) (fig. 3). The border commonly surrounding this pattern is known as a vignette border that incorporates oblong cartouches enclosing a scenic design. These types of borders reached their peak between 1832–1847 (Samford 1997: 21). Figure 4 shows that the border on this particular plate contained scenes of a boat with a curved bow and a sail. I date this particular plate from the 1830s–40s.

Flow Blue. On flow blue transferware, the ink was caused to run by adding a volatilizing solution such as lime or chloride of ammonia during the glaze firing, producing a soft, halo-like effect. Blue was the most common color, and early patterns have Chinoiserie themes (fig. 5). The peak years of production were 1839–1856, but they weren't available in quantities in the United States in the 1840s, dating this particular saucer probably to the 1840s–50s.

Brown transfer on Ivory Body. Figure 6 shows an example of brown underglaze transfer on ivory body, which dates this as probably the latest piece on the site, with the mean production of 1881–1888 (Samford 1997: 20). The larger sherd is from the bottom of a plate or shallow dish and shows what appears to be a Romantic scene, judging from the body of water and shrubs, which were popular throughout 19th century. The pieces glued together show the border of this vessel, displaying flowers and curls.

Mystery piece; the black transfer crow. Figure 7 depicts the body of a bird, perhaps a crow, standing on the ground. The piece is curved concavely, telling us that the crow might be from the outside of a cup, or bowl. There are four small fragments that may be from the same vessel, but they indicate very little about the vessel or pattern. On the back, the crow sherd is mostly bluish-white, except for the edge of a few black lines, which could mean a pattern existed, albeit sparsely, on the inside of the vessel, or the maker's mark is in a very strange place. This is a curious piece because it is the only one like it out of the 313 sherds and because I have yet to run across a photo of one similar. Samford (1997: 20) would date the use of the black transfer as having a mean production of 1825–1838. I'm not sure how to categorize this piece. Perhaps someone in the house had eclectic taste in pottery.

Conclusion: What does this pottery tell us?

Cocumscussoc is a site with a sorted history, home to everyone from the Narragansett Indians and the famous Roger Williams, to the wealthy plantation family of the Updikes, to slaves, to tenant farmers, and to average middle class residents. The popular history of Cocumscussoc becomes sparse by the time we reach this last category. The Smith's Castle website lists them under the paragraph heading *Diminishing Fortunes*, and states simply that there was "a series of successive, short-term owners."¹ Apparently the site was past its glory days.

¹ Smith's Castle Online, www.smithscastle.org/about_castle/text/c17-20.htm



Figure 7. Black Transfer Print of Crow, 73-724. Catalog listing, p. 14, A15.



Figure 8. Blue Transfer Print Building, both sherds, 73-844. Catalog listing, p. 14, C8.

Of this varied group, it is about these people of “diminishing fortunes” to which the hundreds of 19th century transfer print sherds that were acquired from across the site speak. While the Updikes of the 18th century owned fine porcelain, which set them apart as people of distinction, the residents of the 19th century owned beautiful dishes of the type that were available to a much wider variety of people. The powers of mass production gave these middle class residents an affordable equivalent to what took the Updikes a small fortune and international connections to obtain. At a site excavated in Rome, New York, similar transfer print earthenware was found. “By the standards of a small town, the original users of these specimens were relatively wealthy and socially prominent (doctors, lawyers, merchants, and politicians). Their house-hold trash reflects this; it is good quality but not the best” (Hansen 1971: 74). I would argue similarly for the owners of Cocumscussoc’s transfer print ware. They owned mostly Blue Willow, which was very common at the time. The number of sherds from the Blue Willow pattern that don’t quite match each other may not mean anything at all, or it may indicate that the family could not afford to buy a complete dinner and tea set all at once, and so had to purchase the pieces separately, and not necessarily from the same company. But the presence of this amount of transferware when there were plainer, less expensive options available shows a concern for aesthetics on the family’s part. ■

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Appendix

Possible owners of the transfer print earthenware, and the years they occupied Cocumscussoc

- 1812, Benjamin Congdon (and heirs)
- 1870, Thomas R. Rathburn
- 1876, Aldridge B. Gardiner
- 1878, Walter B. and Fannie V. Chapin
- 1879, Mrs. Henry A. Babbitt
- 1919, Alice H. Fox
- 1933, Austin G. Fox
- 1936, Austin H. Fox and Alice Fox Gerster

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Earthenwares (from page 13)

Catalog of Transfer Print Earthenware

The sherds have been separated by color of transfer print. Where it was easily discernable, the paste of the sherd has been noted as well. Sherds that appear to have originated from the same vessel have been grouped together under their category. The numbers under each category

designate the number of patterns that could be defined. At the end of each category is the listing of pieces that were too small or chipped to determine whether they belonged together or to one of the other patterns mentioned.

Definitions

bend. The angle where the side of the plate or platter rises up from the base and plateaus out onto the border.

concave curve. When holding the piece, the side with the transfer is facing you, and the piece is bending towards you (you are looking at the inside of a hollow vessel).

convex curve. When holding the piece, the side with the transfer is facing you, and the piece is bending away (you are looking at the inside of a hollow vessel).

curls. Curvilinear designs are called curls. "Curved" is used to refer only to the shape of the piece.

foot of plate. Raised ring on the reverse of a plate where it rests on the table. Several sherds contained a piece of this ring, indicating they were from the bottom of the plate.

marley. Border design.

A. Black and Brown Transfer Print Earthenware (54 sherds)

1. Black underglaze on white body (hard white).

N=24 part of a continuous repeating linear border pattern with scroll motifs.

73-217 & 73-217	Glued together. Piece has front and back (5.5 mm thick). Contains part of foot of underside of plate.
73-504, 73-504, 73-504, 73-504 & 73-484	Glued together. Contains part of foot, underside of plate and is curved.
73-217	Has front and back.
c-513-3	
c-514-3 (x2)	
c-514-4	
c-517-3 (x5, two of which are glued together)	
c-517-cu	
c-518-2 glued to c-518-5	
c-571-3	
73-484 (x2)	
73-984	

2. Dark brown underglaze transfer on ivory body (hard white). N=8 including a piece of the center of a plate or dish, and a part of its curved side.

c-517-4	The plate bottom shows a bit of scenery, with water in the foreground and shrubbery in the background. Around the main scene is a border of small abutting double curls (each curl 4.5 mm wide), with dots under the join of the curls and point above the join, and dots hovering over the center of the double curls. At the very edge of the piece is part of a curl that matches it to the border described below. Piece is 5 mm thick, and contains part of the foot of the plate.
c-404-3, c-404-a, c-404-a, c-404-2-ab, c-404-3 sn540eg10ab3, & ri375n540610	Glued together to form the edge of the platter or plate. Border contains brown flowers and swirls.

3. Black underglaze transfer on off-white body. Print mostly chipped off.

c-517-cu	Looks to be the edge of a plate or saucer.
c-514-3	May have chipped off of preceding piece.
c-514-3	Has slight curve, may be an edge.

4. Black underglaze transfer on white body. Two pieces glued together, forming a curved scalloped edge, maybe of a saucer. The edge of the marley is lacy, inside are small flowers with stippling behind them.

73-834 glued to 73-834	Looks to be the edge of a plate or saucer.
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5. Black underglaze transfer on white body. Part of the edge of a saucer. It is thin, curved slightly concave. It appears to be a negative print. The border is black and the design (part of a curl and some dots) is white.

c-517-3

6. Black overglaze transfer on ivory body (pearlware). Pattern is not discernable—very fine lines, very detailed. Three small pieces.

73-591

c-512-3

c-500-3

Part of an edge, maybe a plate.

7. Black overglaze (?) on white, very worn.

c-517-4

8. Black underglaze on white body (pearlware). Has very fine lines. Both pieces are very small chips.

c-403co-2

c-403-1

9. Black underglaze transfer on white body (pearlware). Border design contains a row of circles, over a line and some curls. Maybe the edge of a saucer. Piece is this (3 mm).

c-502-5

10. Bluish black underglaze transfer on bluish/gray body (pearlware). Border design showing a leaf. Piece is just a tiny chip.

c-519-4

11. Bluish black underglaze transfer on white body (pearlware). Piece has slight concave curve. Border design overlapping triangles with darkened centers. Similar to lattice work common on blue willow borders. Vine running along top half.

c-517-3

12. Black transfer (can't tell if it's over- or underglaze) on white body (pearlware). Tiny chip contains fine lines

c-517-4

13. Black overglaze transfer on white body (pearlware). Too small to see pattern.

73-843

14. Black transfer (can't tell if it's over- or underglaze) on white body (pearlware). Has fine lines.

c-517-3

15. Black underglaze transfer on white (with a tinge of blue) body (pearlware). Convex curved piece showing the body of a bird standing on the ground. The other side is nearly plain except for a small marking—inside of vessel may have had a design. N=4 match in colors of transfer and body, can't tell pattern.

73-724

73-591

c-512-3

c-500-3

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Earthenwares *(from page 15)*

B. Green Transfer Print on Pearlware (14 sherds)

1. Brownish green underglaze transfer on white body. Looks to be the edge of a saucer. Edge of pattern has a row of circles with dots on the center over a stripe of green with white leaves.

c-509-4

2. Green underglaze transfer on white (with tinge of blue) body. c-500-3 glued to c-500-3; border design of abutting double curls (each double curl 6 mm long). Small triangles behind the joins of each double curl, as well as above and below the curls.

c-514-3

Small chip that matches in color to pieces above

c-506-3

Another matching chip with part of a curl on it.

3. Dark green overglaze transfer on white body.

c-41-3

4. Dark green underglaze transfer on white body.

c-404-2

Piece is curved and decorated with fine lines. Design is on both sides (bowl/).

c-513-3

Small matching piece

5. Dark green overglaze on white body.

73-591

6. Dark greenish black overglaze on white body.

c-514-3

7. Very dark green underglaze on white body. Piece is border design—thick band of dark green under fine lines. Has a slight convex curve, 3.5 mm thick..

c-518-4

8. Dark green (almost black) underglaze on white body. Designs on both sides. On the concave side, same design as number 11 under black section. Convex side, remainder of a circle with a dot in the center and eyelashes projecting from it.

c-521-4

9. Green underglaze transfer on white body. Looks like border design, with flowers and curves. Tiny fragment of whit on underside.

73-843

10. Olive green underglaze transfer on white body. Edge piece, probably from a saucer. White on back, on the front olive green and white, box with a Y in the center.

c-517-3

C. Light Blue Transfer Print on Hard White (63sherds)

1. Light blue background, white and darker blue designs underglaze. Pieces are slightly curved, form a vignette border from a Canova pattern plate. ri375n500e615-co12 and c-518-3 fit together to show the right corner of a frame, with a white curled design nestled in the corner and a six petal flower above it. Edge defined by small white circles and blue line. Frame encloses a scene of a boat with a curved bow and a sail. Clouds in the background.

c-517-3	Another right corner as described above, piece of sky from scene showing.
c-517-3	Blue flower from outside the frame. Flowers are in the space separating scenes.
c-403-3	Lower right corner of a scene. Shows white curl in the corner of the frame. Flower and a bit of the boat's shadow showing.
c-501-2	Small chip of blue, same color as above pieces. Mostly bare paste showing. Has bend where border connected to side of plate and plate lip, indicating that the border was about 33 mm wide around the outside of the plate. Edge is slightly scalloped. N=5 Same light blue with pieces of flowers.
c-513-3	
c-517-3	
c-518-3	
c-514-3	Has scalloped edge. Shows there were flowers between the scenic cartouches.
c-501-2	White flowers, blue leaves design between the scenic cartouches on the border.
c-55-3	Depicts a partial urn in dark blue against light blue. Rose at foot of urn. Part of the center of plate.
	N=4 show feathery light blue leaves against white body, part of center of plate.
c-514-3 (x4)	

2. Medium/light blue underglaze transfer on white body. N=2 depict small leaves (maple?), each leaf stem has a berry protruding from each side.

c-514-3	Edge piece, 3 mm thick.
c-404-2	Edge on bend, 3 mm thick.

3. Light blue underglaze transfer on white body. N=3 have delicate curvy lines (tree branches?) all curving in same direction. Some curls have spots in the middle.

73-598	
ri3155t8n510e600-2	Also has some transfer on one side, light blue straight lines.
ri3155t8n510e600-2	Fits preceeding piece. Also has light blue transfer on one side, can't discern pattern. 2-3/4 mm thick.

4. Light blue underglaze transfer on white body. Piece has transfer on both sides, slight curve (edge of bowl?) Scalloped blue lines along the top with dots. Curled plant liine designs below.

c-45-3	
c-501-3-2	Has blue curlicue, looks similar to those on preceeding piece.

5. Light blue underglaze transfer on white body. Darker blue thick multi-shade curls and flourishes.

c-512-3	Concave curve, white on back.
c-514-3	Flat, white on back. 3.25 mm.

6. Light blue transfer on white body. Senic center of a plate. Castle-like building on the water, plant growing out of the water, people in the foreground on shore. On reverse, AU in blue.

c-514-3	Contains above scene.
c-512-3	Small piece that fits onto water part of scene. Has foot of the plate.
c-518-2	Not part of the center scene, but very similar colors, possibly from the border of the plate. Has lip edge. Border with repeating linear pattern and flowers.

—continued on page 18

Earthenwares (from page 17)

C. Light Blue Transfer Print on Hard White, continued

7. Blue underglaze transfer on light bluish/white body. Edge of a plate. Border pattern contains repeating house shaped designs with ovals inside. Underneath, Asian-inspired flowers (magnolias?).

c-512-3	The large border piece.
c-517-3	Chip that fits into on of the flowers on scene above.

8. Light blue underglaze transfer on white. Piece of a senic center of a plate.

73-844	Building with pillars on a hill, steps leading up to it.
73-844	Overlapping fit with above piece. Foreground of building shows post from fence or gate, has a foot of plate underneath. 4 mm thick.

9. Underglaze transfer, small white flowers on light blue body.

c-518-w	
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10. Blue underglaze transfer on white body. Oriental looking flower on white. Part of bend of plate.

c-514-3	
c-501-3-2	Has blue curlicue, looks similar to those on preceeding piece.

N=5 random pieces with small fragments of light blue transfer. Indiscernible whether the belong with any of the other pieces.

c-512-3	White dots on blue.
c-512-3	
c-514-3	Continuous blue "eyes" on white
c-514-3	Lacy design in blue on white
c-517-3	

N=24 random pieces with fragments of light blue transfer.

c-509-4	Bit of blue on one side, white on other. Slight curve.
c-512-3	White on one side, bit of blue transfer on white on other.
c-512-3	Fragment of blue on white.
c-512-3	Bit of blue leaf on white background.
c-512-3	White on one side, bit of blue transfer on white on other.
c-513-3	Small fragment of blue.
c-513-3	Bit of white and blue on one side, white back, has foot of plate.
c-513-3	Fragment of blue transfer on white background on both sides, 4 mm thick.
c-514-3	
c-514-3	Part of a blue flower on one side, white on other.
c-514-3	Fragment of blue on white.
c-514-3	Bit of white and blue on one side, white back, has foot of plate.
c-514-3	White on back, bit of blue leaf on front.
c-517-2	Fragment of blue transfer on white background, part of bend.
c-517-2	White on one side, bit of blue transfer on white on other.
c-517-3	White on one side, bit of blue transfer on white on other.
c-525-2	Curved white back, white front with light blue lines.
c-526-f1	Blue line, white line, blue background (from border?). Maybe with piece of flower.
72-535	Bit of blue on one side, white on other. Slight curve.
73-484	White back with foot of plate, blue flower and leaves on white on front.
73-483	White on one side, bit of blue transfer on white on other.
ri376stpn530e600-2	White on one side, bit of blue background with white curl on other.
ri375n500e615rb-3	Bits of white and blue on both sides.
ri375n500e615ab-3	White on one side, bit of blue transfer on white on other.

D. Flow Blue Pearlware (49 sherds)

1. N=43 part of a saucer with a Chinoiserie theme. Radius, 8 cm. Blue Willow type theme with pagodas and a willow tree in the center of the saucer surrounded by a continuous border that is honey comb, and then switches at the zenith to a flower and vine design. The Marley design is a non-continuous repeating floral. There is part of a maker's mark on the back, but I couldn't associate it with a particular maker.

c-512-3 (x6)	Glued to c-512-3 (x16) and c-513-2
c-512-3 (x3)	Glued to c-512-2
c-513-3	Separate
Flakes:	
c-501-2 (x3)	
c-513-3	
c-513-2	

2. Very dark blue transfer pieces that may be flow blue. N=15.

c-501-3-2	
c-507-2	White on one side, dark blue on the other. On bend.
c-508-3	
c-509-4	Glued to c-509-4. Curved, lip of plate or saucer, transfer on both sides.
c-513-3	White on back, plate foot. Dark blue on front.
c-526-f1	
72-496	
73-112	
73-484	
73-495	
73-548	Lip
73-548	White on one side, dark blue on the other. Convex curve.
73-611	White on one side, dark blue on the other. Convex curve.
73-611	White spot inside, sideways 8, on dark blue

E. Dark Blue Transfer, Blue Willow Pearlware (133 sherds)

All of the following are dark blue underglaze transfer on white body unless otherwise indicated.

1. Centerpiece of a plate, two pagodas with a tree between them. Stone wall in front of pagodas. 4mm thick

c-518-3	Glued to c-518-2
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2. Lip of plate, possibly goes with above mentioned centerpiece. Row of white circles with blue dots in the center above lattice work. Ket motif below lattice, sun with leaves sprouting out between "keys."

73-321	3 mm thick.
c-409-3	3 mm thick.

3. Lip of plate or saucer. Border has white circles with blue dots in center, lattice work below. On lattice work, circles with dark blue and medium blue quadrants, with white centers

c-501-2	
c-512-3 (x2)	Flat, white on back. 3.25 mm.

4. Edge of plate or shallow dish. Convex curve, has part of bend. Lattice work border on one side of bend, blue plant on body side of bend. Back is white.

73-112	
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—continued on page 20

Earthenwares *(from page 19)*

E. Dark Blue Transfer, Blue Willow Pearlware, continued

5. Lip of plate. Slightly different blue than other patters described, less vibrant, closer to denim blue. Border has white circles with blue dots in center above lattice work, which also has blue fancy curls. Back is white. 4 mm thick.

73-216

73-218

Glued to 73-216

6. Piece of lattice from a border.

c-512-3

c-514-3

7. Piece of lattice work. Closer to medium than dark blue.

73-126

Glued to 73-218

8. Unusual piece. Edge of a vessel, transfer on both sides. Concave side, circles with dots above a blue spiral. Convex side, rectangles with blue rectangles inside. Parts of triangles above rectangles. Transfer is faded denim blue on an off whit body. Finish is very dull compared with other pieces.

c-512-3

9. Piece on bend. Rim has white x's. White on back.

c-512-4

10. Dark blue with white x's. Dots in between.

c-513-4

11. Dark blue blurred x's.

c-508-3

12. Small bit of x onvisible on dark blue.

c-514-4

13. Small bit of x on lighter blue.

c-506-3

14. N=3 small, lighter blue pieces (may match).

c-413-2

c-514-3

Double sided, blue on both sides. 3 mm thick.

73-216

15. Medium/dark blue outline of a foot? possible from the running people in Blue Willow scene. White on back.

c-418-3

16. Piece of dark blue flower on white body.

c-407-2

17. Blue semicircle with a half flower inside.

c-521-3

Lip of a saucer? Thin.

c-511-3

Same design, but thicker lip. From matching plate?

18. Dark blue piece of a flower on white. On a bend.

c-517-2

Glued to c-519-2.

E. Dark Blue Transfer, Blue Willow Pearlware, continued

19. Dark blue lines, circles, white curls, N=6.

c-404-2	Blots of dark blue, circles.
c-500-4	Dark blue swirls, dots, white curls.
c-508-5	On bend.
c-508-5	Transfer on both sides. Dots on one side, lines on the other. 3 mm thick.
c-521-3	Fragment of dark blue and circles.
73-136	Lip. Dots and white curls. Dots on back. 3 mm thick.

20. Circles with blue dots in the middle.

c-510-3	
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21. N=2, possibly part of a Blue Willow centerpiece.

c-441-3	Muted blue, looks like a tree, chips of white on back.
c-508-3	Bit of a tree.

22. N=2.

c-521-3	Delicate curve to it. Cup? Bowl? Transfer only on the inside. white on the outside. Blue border 20 mm wide, blotches of blue, can't tell what pattern is. Piece has a lip.
c-521-3	Possibly matches. Also concave curve. Bits of blue on the inside.

23. N=10. Possibly from same vessel. Curved with design in dark and medium blue on outside. White on inside.

73-113	
73-216 (x4)	
73-245 (x2)	
c-515-4	
c-521-3	
c-71-5	Color matches, but it is a flat piece.

24. Circles with blue dots in the middle.

73-216	
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Pieces with transfer on one side, N=27.

73-216	
c-403-3	
c-407-2 (x2)	
c-413-2	
c-413-2	
c-442-2	
c-500-3	
c-501-38	
c-502-5	
c-505-4	
c-510-3	
c-514-3 (x3)	
c-518-3	
c-519-cu	
c-519-4	
c-521-2	

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Earthenwares *(from page 21)*

Pieces with transfer on one side, continued

c-521-3	
c-522-4	
c-j72-3	
73-216	
73-370	
73-704	
T1452	
Random edge pieces, N=6	
c-509-4	Curved. Outside, white merging into blue. Inside, lattice work.
c-511-3	Dark blue edge. Slight concave curve. White outside, blue curls inside.
c-512-3	Edge with dark blue.
c-514-3	Edge with dark blue. Slight concave curve. Medium blue inside. Bit of white with medium blue outside (tree top?). 3.5 mm thick.
c-521-3	Edge dark blue. Outside white. Inside blotches of blue on white. 2.5 mm thick.
c-52p-3	Light blue on edge, white on one side.
Random other pieces of distinction, N=6	
c-500-4	Blue swirls on white.
c-501-3-2	Slight concave curve, dark blue lines on light blue.
c-513-3	Gradation of dark to medium blue on bluish white.
73-124	Tiny blue flowers and swirls on white.
73-484	Glued to 73-484. Blurred criss-crossing lines on white background.
c-52p-3	Light blue on edge, white on one side.

Pieces with transfer on both sides

Pieces with white on the concave side, blue on the convex side (cups and bowls decorated on outside with white inside), N=14.

72-216 (x2)	
73-245	Glued to 73-245c-512-3
73-321	
73-584	
c-407-2	
c-506-3	
c-512-2	
c-512-3	
c-514-3	
c-522-3	Glued to c-522-3
ri375n540e61026-1	

Pieces with blue on the concave side (cups and bowls decorated on inside), N=8.

c-407-2	
c-507-2	
c-508-2	
c-510-3	
c-513-4	
c-514-3	
c-518-3	
c-519-4	

Pieces with transfer on both sides

Flat pieces, or if curved, too chipped to tell. White on one side, blue on the other, N=18

73-200

b-444-7

c-507-2

c-509-4

c-512-3 (x3)

c-514-3 (x3)

c-520-3

c-522-3

c-525-2 (x2)

c-526-3 (x2)

ri375stpn500e615-25

Others, N=3

73-484

Blue on both sides. Curved.

c-403-2

Blue on both sides. Flat.

c-522-3

Blue on both sides. Flat.

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Editors' Note. A color version of the *Chronicle* is posted on the Smith's Castle Web site (www.smithscastle.org/whats_new/chronicle.htm). Readers are encouraged to visit the site to view color images of the earthenware sherds. Also on line is a catalog of the complete collection of earthenware sherds found at Cocumscussoc.

Smith's Castle Archaeology Subject of Ongoing Study at Brown

The paper on earthenware, the third in a series to appear in the *Castle Chronicle*, was written for a material culture course taught by Dr. Patricia E. Rubertone of Brown University's Anthropology Department in fall 2002. The course encourages students to think about material objects as sources of history by providing them with the skills for identifying and interpreting artifacts from historical archaeological sites. In 2002 and again in spring 2005, students learned by working first-hand with the artifact assemblage excavated from Cocumscussoc by Brown University (1989–1994) and the University of Rhode Island (1972–1973). Student projects from the material culture class—which in addition to this report include studies of chinaware and other ceramics, metal hardware and household items, smoking pipes, and glassware—represent the latest phase in Dr. Rubertone's long-term involvement in the excavation, conservation, and interpretation of Cocumscussoc's material record. Since the late 1980s, she and her students have attempted to make sense of that record, and to illuminate in new and important ways the lives and experiences of Cocumscussoc's European colonists (and later European Americans), African slaves, and Native Americans in the 17th through 20th centuries. The editors of the *Chronicle* are indeed grateful to Dr. Rubertone for sharing this and future papers with members of the Cocumscussoc Association.

Four Ghosts Walked at Cocumscussoc

Rhode Island Ghost Stories Always Seem Better, and This Wickford Boy Figured in Them Himself

By Tom Buffum

Editors' Note: The following article was found clipped from a newspaper in the papers of John Hutchins Cady at the R.I. Historical Society. Unfortunately, Cady failed to retain the name of the newspaper or its publication date, and we have not yet been able to uncover this information. Nor have we been able to find information about Tom Buffum, the author. If any of our readers can shed light on these mysteries please contact the office (294-3521 or smithscastle@earthlink.net).

Meshed in as it is with the early history of Rhode Island, it would seem strange indeed if ghosts did not flutter occasionally in the old Cocumscussoc house at Wickford. Forty men lie buried in the dooryard, if legend is to be relied upon. A hook in one of the rooms is said to be where a British officer hanged himself. And a secret passage runs out of the cellar corner leading nobody knows where. Small wonder, then, that gray ghosts have gamboled in the past in such a setting. I know they did, for I lived with them.

Ghosts crept stealthily up the stairs, shrieked horribly in the night, held high carnival in the hall; ghosts sent out soul chilling spirit rappings on the spreading headboards of old beds. But one and all they ran their course and had their day. There are no ghosts at Cocumscussoc now.

But let us turn time backward to that period when they had full sway in the ancient mansion and frightened little children and grown men.

We moved into the drafty old Cocumscussoc mansion in 1897—father and brother and the housekeeper and I. I was 11 years old at the time, and well I remember my first delight with the odd mixture of land and water and apple trees and barns and woods that the old place provided.

The house is a lovable old house. It stands on a sort of circular bastion thrust out into North Cove, this bastion forming the southern half of the great circle that that once bounded the old log stockade in Indian days. Old apple trees still stand at its flanks, but in those days a whole orchard grew row on row to the eastward, and the moon sent shadows through the branches that to a small boy's imagination might be Indians, might be the ghosts of men long dead, might even be burglars—according to what kind of stories father told in the big southeast room at suppertime.

Stories Came Ready Made

Father was a great and good story teller, but before he had lived very long at Cocumscussoc he was to be supplied with such material as he had never dreamed of before, and his stories were to come to him ready made, to be told and retold many times of a winter's evening when the firelight danced on the ceiling and the kerosene lamps sent out a mellow glow.

It was a blustery night in February, in the year 1898. Snow lay on the ground outside and the weather was bitter cold. A bright moon sent a tracery of shadows down through the apple trees and seemed to make the biting weather almost a thing of visible substance.

The big centuries-old house groaned and whispered, and I stood in the dark at the head of the front hall stairs and held my breath—held it in and let it out in short grudging gasps. For I was badly scared, so scared that I stood helplessly and watched the dark below me. I had just come up those stairs through the inky back stairwell, and there was no doubt in my mind. Something had followed me up—had followed me step by step and at about my own pace. I had heard distinctly the creak of each stair tread as the unseen visitor climbed aloft.

Then again I heard it—the creak, creak of footsteps that died away, this when halfway up, and left me with a terrifying, half-caught vision of some unseen monster standing mid-way of the stairs lying in wait for me.

I didn't call or cry out. I couldn't. It was not in me to make a sound. I just stood rigid and waited and gooseflesh ran over me in waves. And presently the door in the room below opened, mellow lamplight cut the dark and revealed—nothing.

"Daddy, oh Daddy," I sobbed, and ran headlong down the stairs with my story.

"You are all nerved up, laddie buck, and your nerves are playing you tricks," my father told me. "See, there is nothing there, and just to show you, I'll shut the door and walk upstirs in the dark myself."

Then it Was Father's Turn

Quietly he closed the door, shutting out the previous lamplight, and his footsteps echoed in the old house as he plodded up those stairs in the utter blackness. He paused at the top as I had done, and each individual hair on his neck stood on end.

Somebody, something, was following along, following slowly and step by step. Father would never admit that he was superstitious, but a match flared suddenly and nervously and lit a puzzled, startled face—this time the face of a grown-up man. And, as before, the light revealed—nothing. So sure was his feeling that something had followed him that he armed himself with a heavy cane and searched the house for mauraders. But there were none.

Time passed and brought its repetitions of the unseen follower and no explanation at all. A small boy used the backstairs when he was alone, and his father hung to the trail of speculation. There were no ghosts! There must be some explanation! Such things didn't happen. But still—



Again, there fell a bitter cold night, and this time a blizzard raged at the timbers of the old house. The wind blew a gale and searched out every cranny in the ancient pile. Queer sounds seemed to come through the downstairs front hall door and I opened the door and stood in the bright room peering out.

Then I froze in my tracks, and father, sensing something wrong, came over and stood beside me.

Together we stood and listened, and suddenly time stood still and we were back in colonial days again. High carnival ruled the hall. Low musical laughs blended with the unmistakable swish of silk skirts. There was a tapping as of canes, or was it swords? on the floor, and once something like a sob

and once again the tinkle of wine glasses as though shaken together on a tray.

Daddy thought of that hook in the living room where is said a British officer hanged himself, or, it is even whispered, was hanged.

Could this be one of the parties that officer had attended? He wondered in spite of himself, in spite of his strong common sense. And he thought of the 40 dead soldiers buried out in the yard and wondered again if they too had a hand in the hilarity.

Frightened and Sheepish

The laughter faded out, the rustling died away, and the lamplight showed two figures only—a frightened child and a sheepish, puzzled man. Was his fancy playing him tricks the man pondered? But no! The

youngster had heard it too. This was surly a queer old house with its history of Indian fights and Colonial balls and hangings and dead men out in the yard. What long forgotten history might lie behind those hall sounds, accumulated in the more than two centuries since the house was built!

He wrenched himself back to reality. But he was yet to find the measure of his own supernatural leanings. But he was yet to find the measure fo his own supernatural leanings. It has been said that everybody has some superstition. Father was to find the saying true.

—continued on page 24



Again the night was bitter cold,—cold and still, and the board nails snap-snapped in the frost. and up in the big southwest bedroom father was curled up asleep in a huge old walnut bed with a headboard that almost scraped the ceiling. He tossed a little on the big bed and his hand passed over his face as he swung into that curious zone between sleeping and waking. Then his head jerked upright on the pillow, and a sleepy man was suddenly very much awake.

He arose hastily and lit the lamp, then looked behind his bed and swept the room with his eyes. he noted that the doors were all bolted and the windows clamped. There was no way open into that room, yet someone—. Again sharp and clear came the sound that had waked him, echoing loud in the stillness of the old beamed and paneled room, three staccato taps on the headboard of the old bed—three taps and no more, and father shivered and threw a comforter around him and sat down in the armchair.

Then a cold sweat broke over him as he fought back again slowly to what seemed reality. he tried to bring to his sleep-fuddled mind all that he had heard or read about spirit rappings, and could only half remember the spirit ritual as he had learned it from his “furriner” nurse years before.

The Meaning of Three Raps

Three raps meant something fearful, something appalling, something completely final, but he couldn’t remember what. It must be death or something equally disastrous. He looked at his watch and shivered again and drew the comforter closer around his ankles. The hour was 12. It was midnight and there was very little hope. His number was surely up.

But there were no more knocks, and finally he fell asleep sitting there in the armchair, only to be awakened as gray dawn crept through his windows by three more knocks and then a single loud rap.

He was a worried man. He said to himself that he was not superstitious. What did an unsuperstitious person do when spirits rapped on his headboard and rapped three times? If it meant death, you’d be just as dead one way as the other and perhaps it might be better to try to understand the message. Full daylight clarified his mind, and he dressed and went about his daily chores, more troubled than he cared to admit.

All through the month and always on cold nights these rappings continued. Father had long since shed his fears, since nothing disastrous happened, and as in the case of the front hall follower and the laughter and silk rustlings, was earnestly on the trail of a plausible explanation.

But another ghost was to walk before that explanation was complete,—a ghost that was never to be fully laid.



We were eating in the back dining room, father and I, and Dad was telling fanciful stories of the old slave days—of the old slave trade. He told about the chains let into the wall in the dungeon-like cellar corner, about whips that hung on pegs, and expanded upon the sufferings of early slaves in those chains.

Suddenly in both sotry teller and listener the blood ran cold. Without warning there cut through the air such a scream of awful agony as to make the blood stand still—a long drawn-out eerie wail as of a soul in torment. Then silence and the pounding of two cold human hearts.

Once again it came, less vibrating this time, and again the silence settled down on the two and the little boy snuggled against his father wide-eyed and trembling.

After a long interval father laughed—a bit uncertainly. “Well,” he said, “that was a climax to my sotry.” But never while he lived in that house was he to find what caused the unearthly racket, although the manifestation was several times repeated. Quite probably his suspicion was correct—that air blowing through cold walls had vibrated a loose lath end at a certain temperature.

Solutions for Three Mysteries

We finally laid all three of the remaining ghosts, but it took a long time, and the solution of the headboard rappings came only by accident.

Late in February I sat all day watching workmen repaper the walls of the hall. But close as I watched I did not see those ghosts of long ago flee silently from behind the old wallpaper as it was torn off walls, and pass out never to return.

That old paper had been hung these many many years, and it was loose in some spots and tight in others. The wind got behind those loose spots and the spirits of the past had a holiday. The new paper was tight to the wall, and though the small boy did not then know it, the workmen were sealing up the old hiding places of those ghosts of laughter and rustling silks and tinkling glasses with flour paste.

Close inspection found the answer to the eerie footsteps that followed up the stairs. Examination showed that ancient stair-treads were sprung down when pressed with the foot in cold weather, and after a little interval snapped back. The snapback supplied the sound of footsteps folowing.

Turning now to the most baffling and annoying of all the ghosts in the house—the ghost that knocked

on the headboard—let us look in one very cold morning in early March on a bedroom scene.

Father has slept late and is dressing leisurely, and the early sunlight strikes aslant and falls on the left headboard castor at the exact point where it touches the floor. His eyes roam casually and rest for a moment on this bright spot, and as he looks, behold the floor rises a perceptible trifle and “crack” goes the knock on the headboard. He goes over and moves the heavy bed three inches and that grisly ghost never knocks again.

The little boy of this story is a little boy no longer. He carries a waistline now, and his hair is touched with gray around the temples, and a bald spot shines

where thatch should be. But still a little boy at heart, he seldom passes that well-loved old house on the Boston Post Road without a reminiscent tingling of the scalp and without being carried back to those good old days of childhood when the four ghosts walked at Cocomcussoc. ■



Exploring Castle Myths and Legends

Secrets in the Cellar

Tom Buffum recalled several legends about the basement of Smith’s Castle that persist to this day. Mr. Buffum noted, “A secret passage runs out of the cellar corner leading nobody knows where.” He also describes “the chains let into the wall in the dungeon-like cellar corner” used to shackle slaves.

Mr. Buffum’s recollections, which span 1897–98, are partly confirmed by another writer who visited the Castle in that period. Mrs. F. Burge Griswold, writing in *Old Wickford: The Venice of America* (1900), described the tour she received by the “courteous resident [who] took me all through the mansion, and gave me such information as she had gathered from tradition.” She recalled, “It has been said ... that in an upper room were stalls where slaves were confined, with ‘holds’ to which their feet were bound, and in the cellar was a place of hiding.” She added, “Under the northern steps is a low door with a rude stone flight leading down... . The pitchy darkness frightened me, and deterred me from descent... . I was satisfied to accept my guide’s dictum that there was a small square room in the cellar which possibly was the ‘hiding place’ in the former days of peril.”

The 19th century is a little-known period in Cocomcussoc history, with most research focusing on the Smith-Updike family ownership in the 17th and 18th centuries. As Elizabeth Hoover notes in the cover story on earthenware, the 19th century—outside of our interpretive focus—has been relegated to a period we call “diminishing fortunes.” The occupants of Smith’s Castles, their stories, and their changes to the building have not been told. Could these period accounts be accurate?

The story of the secret passage was told even up through the 1980s on house tours, sometimes with an unlikely connection to its use as part of the underground railroad. A walk through the basement today certainly shows no evidence of a passageway. Quite likely the secret passage and the hiding place referred to something much more commonplace. John Hutchins Cady, the preservationist who renovated the Castle from house to museum, noted in his journal on June 19, 1951, “Inspected cellar... . Found that original steps of cellarway had been relocated to provide access under porch (now removed).” Some former residents had relocated the cellar entrance to the back of the house, leaving the original entrance intact. Was this then hidden behind a new wall, making them secret or hidden? Cady removed the newer cellar entrance at the back and reopened the old one (where it is today at the west side of the house near the garden).

Although Mr. Buffum and Mrs. Griswold disagreed on the location of chains and holds (in the cellar or in an upper room?), their presence is tougher to dismiss. The cellar shows evidence of heavy restoration over the years. It is quite plausible that the Updikes restrained their slaves with holds or shackles. It is equally plausible that residents of the Castle in the 20th century were embarrassed (or horrified) by the evidence of slavery and removed them. After the Civil War through the mid-20th century, all across South County the physical reminders of slavery were being dismantled, as Rhode Islanders chose to recast their history of trading and owning slaves.

—Neil Dunay

The Cocumscussoc Association

This Fall at Smith's Castle

September

Day	Time	Event
Thursday, 7	9:00 a.m.	Docent meeting
Monday, 18	7:00 p.m.	Trustee meeting

October

Day	Time	Event
Thursday, 5	9:00 a.m.	Docent meeting
Saturday, 14	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Colonial Harvest Festival (rain date Sunday, Oct. 15)
Monday, 23	7:00 p.m.	Trustee meeting
Sunday, 29	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Closing day

November

Day	Time	Event
Thursday, 2	9:00 a.m.	Docent meeting
Thursday, 30	9:00 a.m.	Docent meeting

December

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 2	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Christmas at the Castle
Sunday, 3	Noon–4:00 p.m.	Christmas at the Castle
Sunday, 10	To be announced	Member/guest holiday party

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