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“Articles too Tedious to Enumerate”: The Appreciation of Ceramics in Mid-18th-Century Newport, Rhode Island

Christina Hodge

Ceramic possession in mid-18th-century Newport, Rhode Island is contextualized through an analysis of newspapers and probate lists, providing background for the interpretation of archaeological remains from a mid-18th-century house lot in Newport that is now part of the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard site. The interpretation of ceramic evidence is approached through notions of tediousness, taste, and distinction. The language of contemporary documents highlights differences in the perception of different ware types and forms over time; references to stoneware and creamware, for example, did not meet expectations. The relationship between levels of ceramic marking in texts and ceramics' perceived social significance is not always linear. Further research may elucidate how Newporters used ceramics to create, maintain, and transform class-based (and other) identities.

La possession de céramiques au milieu du XVIII^e siècle à Newport, dans l'état de Rhode Island, est mise en contexte grâce à l'analyse de journaux et de listes homologuées. Cette analyse fournit une toile de fond pour l'interprétation des vestiges archéologiques mis au jour sur le terrain d'une maison datant du milieu du XVIII^e siècle à Newport faisant maintenant partie du site Wanton-Lyman-Hazard. L'interprétation de la présence des céramiques s'articule autour d'une approche basée sur le manque d'intérêt, les préférences et la distinction. Le langage utilisé dans les documents contemporains fait ressortir les différences dans la perception des différents types de céramique et des différentes formes au fil du temps. On a noté que la qualité et la quantité des références au grès et au creamware, par exemple, ne répondaient pas aux attentes. La relation entre la quantité de détails sur la description des céramiques et la perception de sa signification sociale n'est pas toujours linéaire dans les textes. Des recherches supplémentaires pourront peut-être nous éclairer sur la façon dont les habitants de Newport utilisaient les céramiques pour créer, maintenir et transformer les identités fondées sur, entre autres, les classes sociales.

Introduction

Gideon Sisson, a merchant of Newport, Rhode Island, purchased a full column advertisement in the *Newport Mercury* of June 26, 1769 (*Newport Mercury* 1769). He devoted nearly two-thirds of his 83 lines to a dizzying array of goods: fabrics such as calamancos, cambleteens, and cambrics; clothing accessories such as stays, gloves, hats, and ribbons; and buckles, beads, buttons, and other items of personal adornment. The remaining lines named: mundane and exotic foodstuffs such as flour and ground ginger; dry goods, including paper and cow skins; and assorted other objects such as sewing supplies, utensils, Jew's harps, and snuff boxes. One finds ceramics only toward the end of the advertisement, between the chalk and the Bibles: “China cups & saucers, Tortoise-shell and neat stone ditto.” Sisson ended his list with the statement “... and other articles, too tedious to enumerate.”

The concept of tediousness recurred to me as I researched the documentary evidence of ceramic availability in 18th-century Newport,

an understudied topic (Ingebretsen 2001: 2). This research is foundational to my dissertation, which considers archaeological finds from a house lot in Newport that is now part of the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard historic site (owned by the Newport Historical Society) (Hodge 2007). Members of the middling sorts occupied the site in the mid-18th-century (Hodge 2002). The primary sources used in the present paper span the period 1720–1774 and include the *Newport Mercury* newspaper and Newport probate inventories.

I approached these documents hoping for conjunctions between my own preoccupations with the form and value of ceramic wares and the concerns of the documents' creators. I recorded every “parcel” of stoneware for sale or “sundries” of earthenware stashed in a closet, a task I sometimes considered tedious. In contrast, I welcomed descriptions like “Stone Ware, consisting of. . . —Dishes—Plates—Cups and Saucres [*sic*], white, and blue & white, &c.” (*Newport Mercury* 1764) because of their detail. The variability of these

ceramic descriptions led me to consider what Sisson and other 18th-century Newporters found “tedious to enumerate,” and why.

To this end, I attempted to identify trends in ceramic *description* in newspaper advertisements and probate inventories. Probate inventories and advertisements are evaluations. Their authors translated objects into words. The creation of these documents took time and money, strongly suggesting a relationship between an object’s perceived value and its description. “Too tedious” items, for example, may have been omitted entirely or described without detail or in bulk terms. There were locally understood, unwritten standards that governed what was and was not “countable” in probate inventories (Bedell 2000: 228); this must also have been true for advertisements and similar documents. To understand the unwritten rules, value systems, ideals, and imaginative worlds of the mid-18th-century, one must ask: What was omitted from probate inventories and advertisements? What was described and how? How did patterns of description change over time? Why?

I had preconceived notions of which ceramics 18th-century persons would consider tedious to describe. Based on several studies of 18th-century ceramic trends (for example, Beaudry 1988; Beaudry et al. 1988; Bushman 1993; Deetz 1996; Goodwin 1999; Miller et al. 2000; Noël Hume 1991 [1970]; Yentsch 1996), I expected wares that were novel and/or closely associated with status, refinement, and gentility would be both most often mentioned and described in the most detailed way: china in all periods studied, especially tea-related forms in the earlier decades; delft in the 1720s and 1730s, especially plates/platters; refined stoneware after the 1740s; creamware after the late 1760s. I also anticipated that notations of form, closely associated with specialized function, would steadily increase over time (Beaudry 1988; Bedell 2000). These expectations were only partially supported by the documents examined.

There are several existing studies of Newport probate inventories (Curran 1989; Ingebretsen 2001; Mrozowski 1981; Mrozowski, Gibson, and Thornbahn 1979), newspaper advertisements (Mrozowski 1988), and merchant account books (Mrozowski 1981; Mrozowski, Gibson, and Thornbahn 1979).

Almost all of these studies address the changing social significance of ceramics. Data collection strategies range from family-oriented and anecdotal (Mrozowski 1981), to community-oriented and systematic (Ingebretsen 2001; Mrozowski 1988), to avowedly random and male-biased (Curran 1989). The present study includes a larger database than is acknowledged in any of the above works and has a different, linguistic orientation.

Sources and Methods

My documentary database consists of 662 legible probate inventories, dating from 1720–1774, and 277 issues of the *Newport Mercury*, dating from 1758–1774. Probate inventories exist for the entire period studied and provide considerable detail about individual objects (as well as corollary information about people and households, consumer choice, and object use that could be used in future studies). This detail was accessible even though the surviving inventories, like the rest of the town’s 18th-century records, are partial and water damaged. Inventories were considered if 50% or more of their pages are extant. Even partial inventories included substantial information regarding goods possessed, as these documents were object-oriented.

The *Mercury* was not founded until 1758. Since it was a weekly paper, its advertisements overall provide more consistent evidence than do the inventories, although not all issues have survived. Advertisements were consistently found on the first and/or last pages of an issue, and newspapers were considered if 75% or more of their pages are extant. The advertisements more reliably reflect changing fashions than do probate inventories. Inventories present lifetime accumulations of goods, while advertisements were regular features of newspapers and were closely associated with the introduction of new ceramic wares and forms. This paper is not concerned with demonstrable statistical significance. Statistically significant analysis may not be possible, given the vagaries of the preservation of Newport’s records. Trends, however, are apparent in the data reviewed here.

Descriptions were only counted as “of ceramics” if the ware type was specified, that

is, if they were *known* to be ceramic vessels and not wood, pewter, tin, brass, copper, bell metal, or iron. The four ceramic ware categories taken from the sources were earthenware, stoneware, delft, and china. Correlating these terms with the actual wares they describe will be a future project; for example, no attempt was made to distinguish between refined and unrefined stoneware or English and Chinese porcelains. The fifth category of “other” includes rare references to an unspecified or unrecognized potential ceramic type, such as “enameled cups and saucers,” “chalk bowls,” or “riveted bowls.” In the 1760s and 1770s, designations of color minus ware type occurred more often than in earlier decades. If such adjectives were associated with only one ware material, the way “Queen’s ware” is only earthenware, the reference was noted as of ware type. It was not possible to separate refined wares from coarse wares. This information was frequently not provided in the sources and I chose not to rely on pre-conceived associations between ware and form.

A key issue is the use of marked vs. unmarked terms: “marked terms make more fine-grained discriminations than do the unmarked terms” (Yentsch 1988: 153; see also Appadurai 1986; Beaudry 1988). The piece of semantic detail on which the present study rests is vessel form. Notations of vessel number, decorative type, or monetary value could have been used in place of form as the category of marking detail. I chose form because it was the most frequently noted detail in both advertisements and inventories, and because other studies have found it to be a significant 18th-century category (Beaudry 1988; Beaudry et al. 1988; Bedell 2000).

The advertisement of a “Parcel...of Stone Ware” (*Newport Mercury* 1759) and probate listing of “Sundrys [sic] of earthen ware” (Town of Newport 1722) were considered “unmarked” references. These wares were not so taken-for-granted as to be overlooked entirely, but they were not considered worthy of detailed description of form. A probate list including “mended China bowls, China plates, blue & white China plates, enameled China plates, small bowls China, burnt China plates,” and “China dishes” (Town of Newport 1771), however, shows a clear concern with particu-

lars of vessel form and decoration. The advertisement of

NOTTINGHAM or BROWNWARE, Quart, pint and half pint bowls, quart, pint and half pint mugs, pipkins, bakepans. BLACK FLINT WARE, 3 pint, quart, pint and half pint tea pots, bowls, milk pots, sugar dishes, coffee pots, salts. PAINTED DELFT WARE, 2 quart, quart, pint and half pint bowls, plates. WHITE STONE WARE, Dishes, plates, chamber pots, cups and saucers, quart, pint and half pint mugs, bowls. ENAMEL'D STONE, Tea pots, cups and saucers, milk pots, sugar dishes, bowls. Complete sets of cream coloured or queen's ware, enamel'd flowered, and plain... (*Newport Mercury* 1771)

articulates similar preoccupations (FIG. 1). Such references were considered “marked.”

My analysis is biased toward the perceptions of wealthier, or at least more civic-minded, literate males. Male merchants wrote most newspaper advertisements. Their audience was at least as broad as literate Newport, however, and Mrozowski notes that many of the *Mercury's* advertisements were aimed specifically at “ladies” (Mrozowski 1984: 43). The material world of 18th-century British America

Samuel Brenton,
By the Crate or Retail, at the lowest Price, for Cash,
GLASS WARE,
Handsome flowered, and plain quart, and pint decanters, pint, half pint, gill, and half gill tumblers; — enamel'd, wormed, and plain wine glasses, gelly glasses, cream pots, vinegar cruets, faltcellars, fugar pots, beer epus, ale glasses, falvers.
NOTTINGHAM OR BROWN WARE,
Quart, pint and half pint bowls, quart, pint and half pint mugs, pipkins, bakepans.
BLACK FLINT WARE,
3 pint, quart, pint and half pint tea pots, bowls, milk pots, fugar dishes, coffee pots, salts.
PAINTED DELFT WARE,
2 quart, quart, pint and half pint bowls, plates.
WHITE STONE WARE,
Dishes, plates, chamber pots, cups and saucers, quart, pint and half pint mugs, bowls.
ENAMEL'D STONE,
Tea pots, cups and saucers, milk pots, sugar dishes, bowls.
Complete sets of cream coloured or queen's ware, enamel'd, flowered, and plain.
Also, an assortment of wine, and other liquors, currants, and raisins. A few quintals of the best dumb fish, &c.

Figure 1. Newspaper advertisement for items sold by Samuel Brenton, *Newport Mercury* 20 May 1771.

was, in fact, deeply gendered, and new opportunities for gendered consumerism could be both threatening and destabilizing (Hodge 2005; Mrozowski 1988:187). Colonial probate records, however, most often describe the estates of wealthier, older males (although women's consumer choices may be embedded and masked within those inventories) (Beaudry 1988; Bedell 2000; Ward 1987). Court-appointed appraisers compiled inventories, men selected primarily because they could accurately assess the monetary worth of objects (Brown 1988: 81).

Object-oriented studies of primary documents typically focus on the presence or absence of goods in order to describe interior furnishings, the use of space, and changing lifestyles (Shackel 1992: 205). It is possible to go beyond description and address the symbolic meanings of material possessions because items listed in probate inventories and other sources reflect "not only the standard of living of their owner but also the cultural assumptions that guided their purchase" (Main 1975: 92). The present project is concerned with the cultural assumptions that guided not the purchase but the *description* of household goods in inventories and advertisements.

There are precedents for this semantic orientation. Yentsch (1988: 154) distinguished localized subsistence patterns on 18th-century Cape Cod in probate inventories because different levels of detail were used to describe the same categories of objects in different places. Beaudry et al. (Beaudry 1988; Beaudry et al. 1988) defined a folk nomenclature for Chesapeake foodways vessels based on the language of probate records. Beaudry (1988: 48–50) found that descriptive modifiers reflected shifts in "attitudes about how vessels should be employed," specifically the increasing significance of special purpose vessels during the 18th-century. Bedell (2000) has noted changes in the detail and rigor of probate inventory language over time. The present study is similar to Beaudry's (1988) in spirit. The present study uses the *language* of primary sources to access Newporters' changing appreciation of different ceramic ware types during the 18th-century, and the relations of these trends to issues of taste and social distinction.

Description of Trends

Ceramic wares and forms described in Newport's inventories and advertisements had different "appreciation trajectories." That is, different levels of detail regarding ware and form were considered appropriate for different ceramics at different times. Changes in the occurrence of marking in ceramic references over time overall met expectations. With certain ware types, however, there were discrepancies between the trends I anticipated and those I found.

References to ware type contextualize 18th-century Newporters' concern with ceramic form. They are tracked to reconstruct not the *availability* of different wares, but trends in their *notability*. The occurrence of ceramics in Newport's probate inventories increased during the 18th-century. While ceramics were mentioned in only about 35% of inventories from 1720–1724, they featured in over 90% of inventories just 50 years later (FIG. 2). During the 1720s and 1730s, roughly 90% of the inventories mentioned earthenwares, 50% stonewares, 15% china, and only 5% delft (FIG. 3). By the 1740s, references to china and stoneware were trending upwards while earthenware references were declining, despite the introduction of creamwares in the late 1760s. These three wares were referenced in about 70% of inventories by the mid 1770s. Even delft ownership became more widespread over time, although its inventory references leveled off at around 25%. This evidence is consistent with the known diversity and increasing accessibility of imported ceramics (Bushman 1993; Martin 1994; Miller 1984; Richards 1999).

Newspaper advertisements tended to include ceramics slightly more often over time, from 6% to 8% between 1759 and 1774. Within this period, however, instances of ceramic reference in advertisements fluctuated widely (FIG. 4); the percentage of advertisements mentioning ceramics ranged from 0% to over 25%.

Before 1769, there are usually too few ceramics advertisements to describe reliably ware-specific trends (FIG. 5). "China" wares, however, were regularly included in advertisements from 1759–1764. Presuming ceramics were mentioned in order to attract customers, delftware was as strong a lure as china only in 1769. Later, it occurred in 5% of advertisements or less, possibly reflecting waning consumer

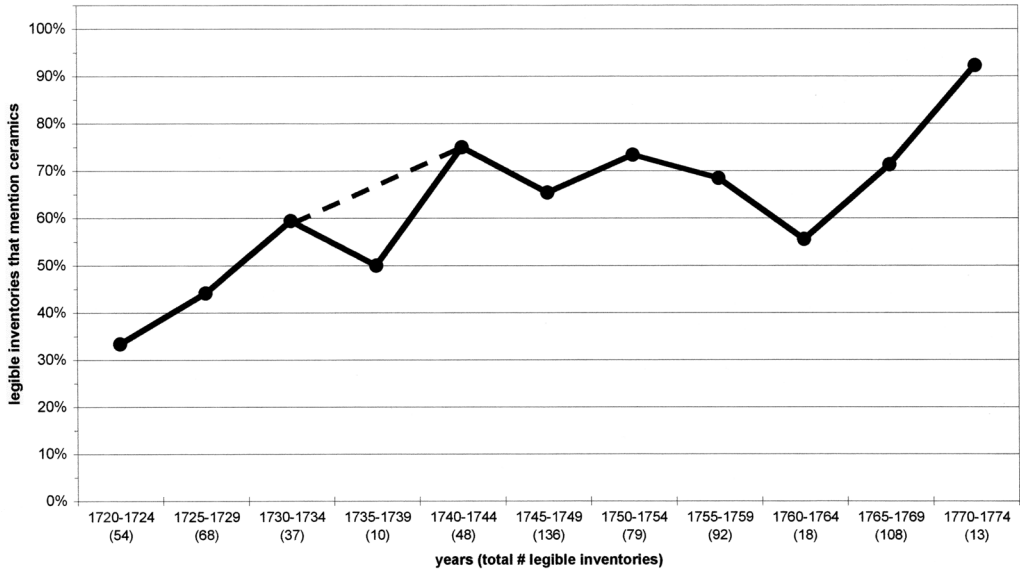


Figure 2. Mention of ceramics in Newport probate inventories, 1720–1774. Only nine legible inventories were found for the period 1735–1739. Since this small sample may not be representative, a dashed line shows a continuing trend for that period.

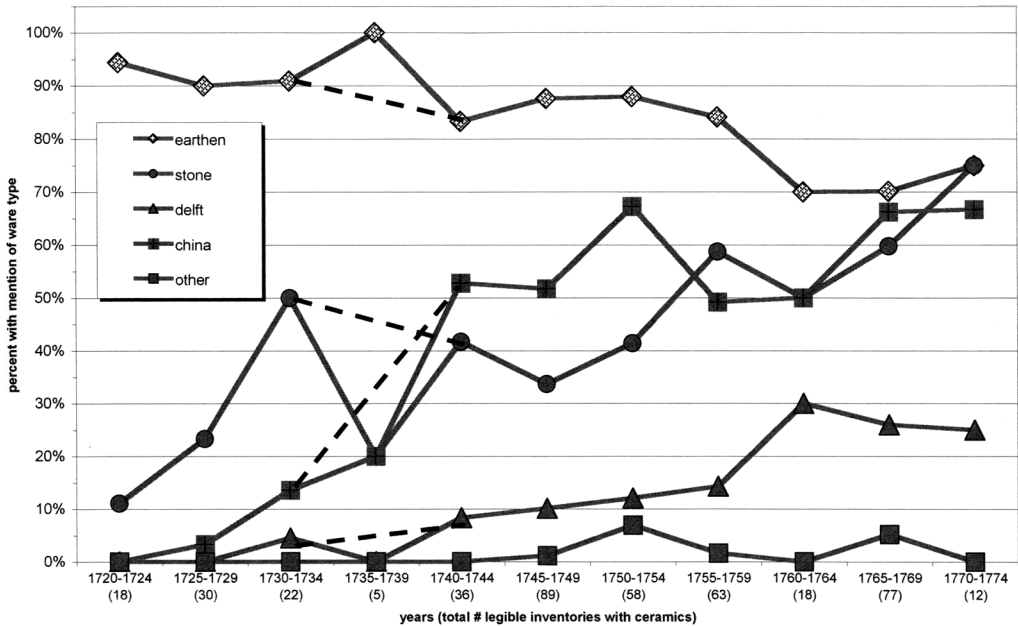


Figure 3. Mention of ceramic ware type in Newport probate inventories with ceramics, 1720–1774. Only four legible inventories mentioned ceramics for the period 1735–1739. Because they may not be representative, dashed lines show continuing trends for that period.

demand (Noël Hume 1991 [1970]: 142). Although I expected fashionable porcelain or novel creamware to dominate the advertisements after mid-century, stoneware was overall the most frequently mentioned ware

from 1769–1772. China was mentioned in 46% of 1771’s advertisements to stoneware’s 41%, a small advantage. Earthenware was neglected in advertisements prior to 1764.

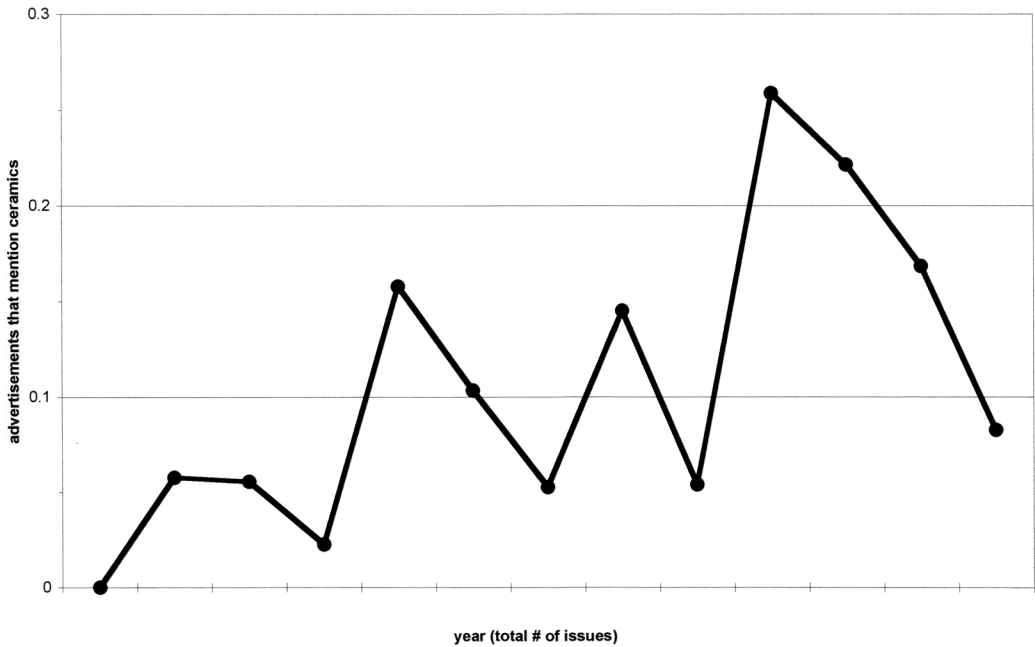


Figure 4. Mention of ceramics in *Newport Mercury* advertisements, 1758–1774.

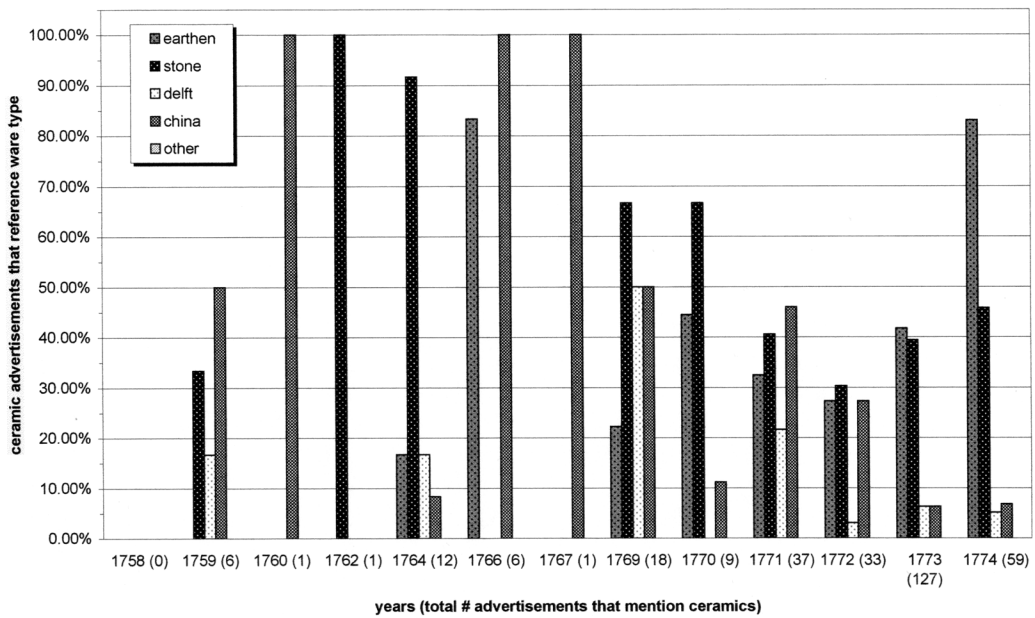


Figure 5. Mention of ware type in *Newport Mercury* advertisements with ceramics, 1758–1774.

The earliest known Newport reference to creamware, or at least cream colored wares, occurs in the 1768 probate inventory of captain, mariner, and apparent shop keeper, Jeremiah Osborne (Town of Newport 1768). It is a robust reference and shows a clear commitment to the ware. Among his shop stock were 42 "cream colored flat small plates," 21 "cream colored soup plates," 5 "large cauliflower tea pots without tops," and 21 "smaller cauliflower tea pots without tops." Cauliflower wares date after 1759, when a new, even-toned green glaze was applied to the refined cream colored bodies developed in the 1750s; proper creamware dates after 1762 (Noël Hume 1991 [1970]: 123–125). "Enameled" wares listed in the Osborne inventory might refer to overglaze painted cream colored wares, which were first manufactured ca. 1765 (Miller et al. 2000: 12). Varieties of cream colored wares for tea and table were thus available to Newporters no more than six, and perhaps as few as three, years after they were introduced to the British market. The introduction of creamware to the Newport market by 1768 did cause an increase in earthenware (typically identified only as "Queen's ware") advertising, but only in 1773–1774 were *most* ceramic advertisements for earthenware.

Trends in references to vessel form also only partially met my expectations. Overall, I anticipated that notation of vessel forms reflecting specialized function and individualized place settings would steadily increase over time and would be particularly associated with china throughout the 18th-century, stoneware in the 1740s, and creamware in the 1760s–1770s (FIGS. 6, 7). Existing newspapers indicate that advertisers were only clearly committed to describing vessel form in the late 1760s and early 1770s. By 1773 and 1774, form notation again becomes rare. During these years, wares were more typically advertised as "sets" or "assortments." Advertisers do seem consistently to have noted china forms throughout the period studied, but there are several gaps in the record.

Form notation in probate inventories only sometimes met expectations. Appraisers did not consistently note china forms more than the forms of other wares, even though 18th-century china is typically related to social display and refined drinking and dining prac-

tices, particularly tea drinking (Roth 1988). Transcribing vessel form for coarse and/or refined stonewares consistently mattered most to appraisers, except during the years 1730–1734. During this period, the higher occurrence of form notation for delft (a mug and two large platters [Town of Newport 1731a]) and china (cups and saucers, a tea pot, a milk pot, plates, punch bowls, and a bowl [Town of Newport 1730, 1731b]) more closely meets predictions, although it results from only four inventories and may not be representative. Stoneware form notation rises after 1745–1749, as refined "white" and "white and blue" (probably scratch blue) stonewares are consistently mentioned in cup, saucer, and tea pot forms. White stoneware plates are also noted after about 1760. So, although stoneware forms were often described throughout the period studied, the introduction of white saltglazed stonewares *is* apparent in the documents. Instances of form description largely leveled off in probate inventories after the 1740s and were comparable across different ware types, including increasingly unfashionable delft and stonewares.

Discussion: Tediousness, Taste, and Value

The middle decades of the 18th-century are generally recognized as a time of profound social change in America, as developing political relations, material forms, and social values were challenged and adopted (Bushman 1993; Hoffman, Sobel, and Teute 1997; Landsman 1997). The cohesion and timing of this so-called "Georgian Revolution" are debated (Bedell 2001; Bushman 1993; Deetz 1988, 1996; Harrington 1989; Johnson 1996; Leone and Potter 1988; Mangan 2000; Pendery 1992; Pogue 2001). The strategic use of descriptive ceramic terms relates to not only "technological and behavior changes" (Beaudry 1988: 48) of the period, but also to developing notions of taste and social distinction.

"Taste" is a chimerical term and difficult to define, which is of course part of the concept's power. According to Edmund Burke's 1757 description, standards of taste were "allowed on all sides" and "supposed to be established in our common nature," but at the same time this "delicate and aerial faculty, which seems too volatile to endure even the chains of a defi-

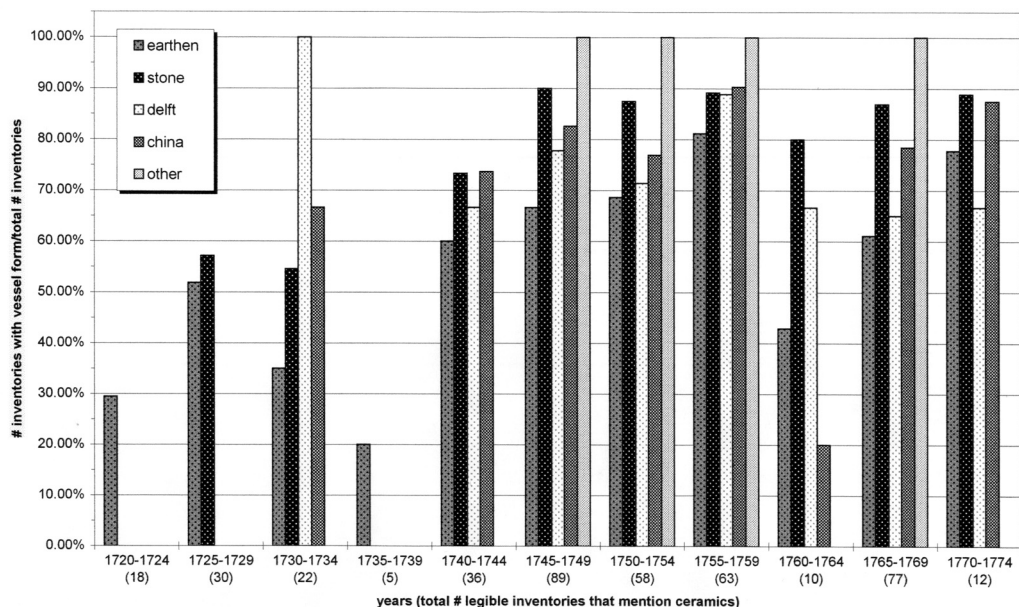


Figure 6. Mention of ware type and vessel form in Newport probate inventories with ceramics, 1720–1774.

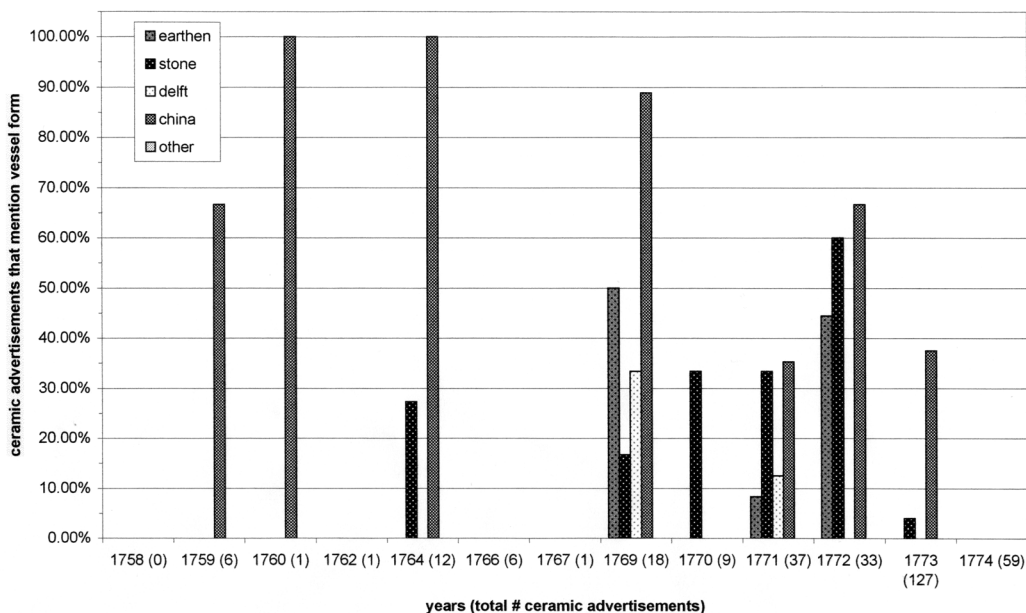


Figure 7. Mention of ware type and vessel form in *Newport Mercury* advertisements with ceramics, 1758–1774.

nition, cannot be properly tried by any test, nor regulated by any standard” (Burke 1990 [1757]: 11). Richards (1999: 37–38) explains that, in the 18th-century, taste could pertain to fashionable style, personal accomplishment, sensibility, discrimination, and refined judg-

ment. Understood this way, taste is “embodied practical knowledge” (Stahl 2002) expressed through choice of objects, actions, and expressions in everyday life. It is used to distinguish between social categories, create/maintain/alter one’s own place in society, and assess the

places of others (Bourdieu 1996: 241). Expressions of taste are meaningful because of shared beliefs. For example, in Yentsch's probate study of Cape Cod "words within the inventories revealed basic assumptions or ideas of the way things were" (Yentsch 1988: 140). My study is an attempt to identify some of the basic assumptions about ceramics in 18th-century Newport.

Howes and Lalonde (1991: 126) argue that the slippery social structures of the mid-18th-century actually changed peoples' modes of perception, that sensibilities of taste developed to guard against social unease. Exhibiting "good taste" depended on "the capacity to make distinctions," to dissect "every object (be it a meal or a work of art) into its component sensations," thus "legitim[ing] a new means of social differentiation and identification" (Howes, and Lalonde 1991: 129–130; see also Bushman 1993: 81–83; Leone 1984). Objects that are "commonplace—taken-for-granted—do not distinguish in the same fashion as those that are rare" (Stahl 2002: 835; see also Bourdieu 1996: 281–283). If commonplace goods do not distinguish social identities as rare goods do, they are also not *distinguished* in the same way. Detailed ceramic terminology is therefore expressive of taste, but so is the information taken-for-granted or considered unnecessary. Newport's probate inventories and newspapers both illustrate and problematize these ideas by only partially meeting expectations based on them, as discussed above.

I believe the trends of ceramic term marking seen in Newport's 18th-century documents *are* related to developing social values of distinction and the expression of taste, as well as to market forces of novelty, supply, and demand. It is not simply a question of increasing descriptive detail or rigor over time (Bedell 2000: 239). The language of advertisements and inventories is a nuanced "*index* to the shifting sources" of colonial identity in Newport during the 18th-century (Ulrich 1997: 241, emphasis added). The semantics of these documents do not directly address whether ceramics were *more* or *less* valued, but rather *how* they were valued: as new, small, brown, English, Chinese, enameled, best, stoneware, sundry, a plate, jug, set, or assortment, etc.; or as unremarkable, "too tedious" to describe because they were old, common, obvious, or

taken-for-granted. This analysis, admittedly preliminary, suggests that patterns of ceramic signification are accessible via semantic analysis of primary documents. Fuller interpretation of these patterns will depend on contextualization via other aspects of material and documentary culture.

One could criticize the present study because it ignores non-ceramic artifacts that "comprised the larger context in which the ceramics had meaning" (Beaudry et al. 1988: 55; see also Beaudry 1999). Ceramics were the most commonly recovered artifacts from the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard site and so I chose them as the starting point for analysis. Although attributes other than ware are significant (Beaudry 1988; Bedell 2000, 2001; Miller 1980, 1991; Yentsch 1996), ware type was the primary means of ceramic description before the 1780s (Miller 1984: 3), has proved useful in other ceramic studies (Bedell 2001; Martin 1994), and is a category consistently found in the primary documents considered here. Ware-specific patterns of language *are* apparent in Newport's inventories and advertisements, supporting archaeologists' concern with ware type for the period studied. Other ceramic attributes, such as form, are also significant.

This paper is not the first to suggest that material goods are valued for their cultural qualities. That the levels of ceramic marking and ceramics' social significance are related is expected; research clarifies that this relationship is not always predictable and need not be linear. Future research should address why some early expectations of this study were supported while others were not. Why was it "tedious," or unnecessary, to note vessel form in advertisements after ca. 1764? Perhaps advertisers were efficient and the 1770s' consumer was educated. By that time, customers may have known the distinct forms an "assortment" of Queen's ware included *sans* enumeration, or they may have valued the set over the individual item (a preference perhaps visible in the archaeological record).

Advertisements provide another view of changing relationships between people and ceramics in Newport, a town so dependent on trade for its survival (Crane 1985). Larger contexts of trade restrictions and international conflicts lie beyond the scope of this paper but almost certainly are reflected in Newport's

newspaper advertisements (this issue has been explored in later 18th-century Portsmouth, NH, by Agnew [1988]). Although perhaps masked by time-lag and curation in the archaeological record (Adams 2003), a decrease in volume and variability of ceramic imports would be an expected outcome of international tensions. Economic downturns would also affect individual purchasing patterns. Perhaps financial downturns resulting from trade restrictions and political unrest forced an economy of words upon the town's advertisers as well.

I am particularly intrigued by the steady and/or rising attention given to stonewares in both probate inventories and newspaper advertisements before and after the introduction of creamware ca. 1768, a pattern distinct from that seen in the Chesapeake region (Martin 1994). The relationship of stoneware and creamware in the Chesapeake is perceived as a rivalry (Martin 1994:176), while Newport's documents suggest that, there, a strong refined stoneware tradition coexisted with the strengthening creamware tradition from ca. 1770–1774. Why was it usually less “tedious” for Newporters to note the form of stonewares than earthenwares in inventories throughout the 18th-century, or in advertisements from 1769–1772? A real possibility is that creamware was considered properly part of a “set,” and that individual creamware items were not as notable as individual stoneware. Archaeologists attempting to extrapolate social identity from sherds may find the occurrence of matching sets more significant than presence/absence, minimum vessel number, or individual specialized forms.

Affiliations of class, status, and occupation are implicated in expressions of taste among many 18th-century British and Anglo-American urban populations. In Britain, creamware was initially associated with the aristocracy and elite. The new ware succeeded on a large scale, however, because it was produced by the developing middle class for the developing middle class and came to represent broadly shared, class-specific values and aspirations (Richards 1999). Relationships between ceramic tastes and class/occupation have been noted in the probate inventories of such disparate contexts as Suffolk County, Massachusetts, and the South Carolina Backcountry (Crass,

Penner, and Forehand 1999; Pendery 1992; Stone 1970).

Class-related ceramic tastes, patterns of ceramic use, and popularity should also be apparent in Newport. I expect that these preferences were not dictated by the town's elite but were creatively developed within other social classes, represented by the inhabitants of the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard site and other middling sites. For example, if creamware was associated first with the elite and fashionable of a town (Martin 1994: 178), the continuing popularity of stoneware in Newport after the introduction of creamware ca. 1768 may have been supported by the populous middling social ranks of artisans, small business owners, and professionals. Archaeological assemblages from middling households may have the potential to elucidate issues of ceramics and class raised in Newport's inventories and advertisements. I will be mindful of the questions of class and material culture raised in this paper as I continue my own work at the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard site.

The linguistic methodology employed in this study is flexible and may have wide-ranging utility for historical archaeologists and historians. It offers a supplement to object-oriented analyses of probate inventories and other problematic documents, where one cannot reliably trace or quantify relationships between recorded goods, archaeological finds, and goods in daily use (Bedell 2000: 231–233). In Newport, future directions for this research might include searching for income-, gender-, and occupation-related patterns in the Newport documents or contextualizing the ceramic evidence via other material goods and primary sources.

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