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# The Socioeconomic Landscape of Northern Delaware's Taverns and Innkeepers: The Blue Ball Tavern and Vicinity

## **Cover Page Footnote**

A version of this article was presented at the Council for Northeast Historical Society meeting in Trenton, New Jersey, 2005. The research is based on mitigation work done for the Location and Environmental Studies Office, Division of Highways, Department of Transportation, State of Delaware (DelDOT) when the author was with Thunderbird Archaeological Associates.

# The Socioeconomic Landscape of Northern Delaware's Taverns and Innkeepers: The Blue Ball Tavern and Vicinity

Heather A. Wholey

*In the 18th and 19th centuries, taverns and inns were an important element in the early American social and economic landscape, functioning not only to provide meals and lodging, but also as places for community gatherings, festivities, public rallies, auctions, political elections, formal and informal information exchange, and so forth. Evidence and information obtained from both primary and secondary source material and archaeological field investigations recount and illuminate the variety of services provided and socioeconomic niches satisfied by these establishments in northern Delaware. The Blue Ball Tavern of New Castle County, Delaware was one such establishment and is presented within a comparative framework and as a detailed case study in discussions of inter- and intra-community patterning.*

*Les tavernes et les auberges représentaient, aux XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles, un élément important du paysage social et économique de l'Amérique. Leur rôle n'était pas seulement d'offrir des repas et un gîte, mais aussi de fournir un endroit pour les rencontres communautaires, les festivités, les grands rassemblements, les encans, les élections politiques, les échanges formels et informels d'information, etc. L'évidence et l'information obtenus grâce aux sources primaires et secondaires de même que les interventions archéologiques sur le terrain retracent et révèlent non seulement la variété de services fournis par ces établissements dans le nord du Delaware, mais aussi les niches socio-économiques qu'ils satisfaisaient. La taverne Blue Ball du comté de New Castle dans le Delaware, un exemple de ce type d'établissement, est présentée dans un cadre comparatif et comme étude de cas dans une discussion sur les modèles intercommunautaire et intracommunautaire.*

## Introduction

Taverns and inns were important elements in the 18th-century American socioeconomic landscape. They provided meals and overnight accommodations and were a place for community gatherings, political elections, public auctions and often served as communication hubs. Northern Delaware tavernkeepers were a diverse lot composed of widows, farmers, saddlers, smithies, piano makers and so forth, that were, in general, vital members of the larger social fabric. As a whole they catered to numerous constituencies consisting of prominent individuals, politicians, millers, farmers, drovers, and travelers, among others. The taverns and inns were situated in contexts ranging from urban centers, to rural environments, to settings strategic to major transportation routes. Several developments throughout the 19th century, such the temperance movement, transportation innovations associated with turnpike and railroad construction and an associated shift from a domestic to market focused economy, as well as accelerated agricultural production converged, altering the role of taverns and tavernkeepers.

This paper synthesizes documentary research and archaeological evidence to offer a comparative perspective on the role, status, and character of northern Delaware taverns and tavernkeepers in the 18th and 19th centuries. It also details the Blue Ball Tavern as a case study that has yielded insight into the daily operations of taverns and inns within political, commercial, and community life, and that exhibits the impact of regional 19th-century socioeconomic developments on the nature of taverns and tavernkeepers.

## Narrative of the Blue Ball Tavern

The Blue Ball Tavern, in Brandywine Hundred, New Castle County, was located along Concord Pike. The Concord Pike was an important transportation route dating to approximately 1700, earlier known as the Road to Brandywine Ferry, Concord Road, and the Wilmington and Great Valley Turnpike (FIGS. 1 and 2). The initial date of Blue Ball Tavern's establishment is not known, however documentation and archaeological evidence indicates that it was in operation from at least 1787 to around 1850. After the tavern ceased to

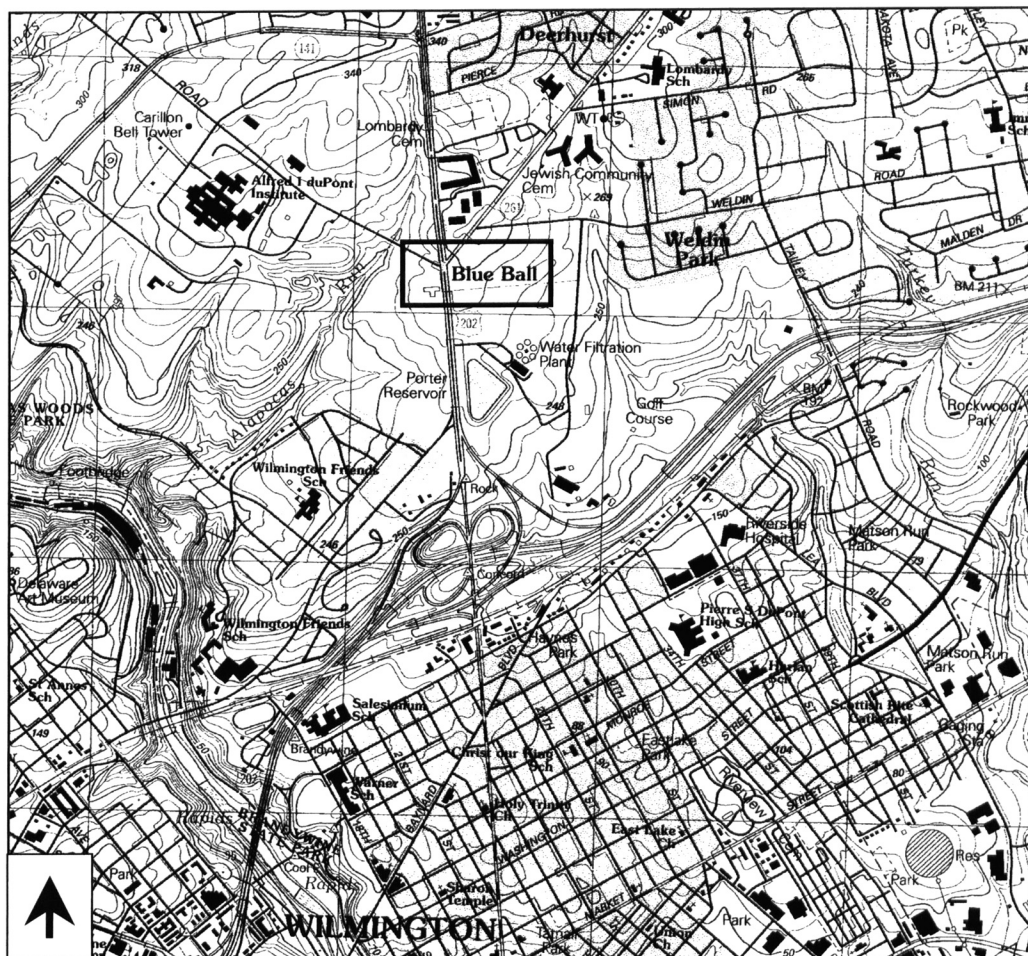


Figure 1. Portion of the USGS 7.5' Wilmington North, Delaware Quad showing the Blue Ball property location.

function as such, the structure itself was converted and operated as a farmhouse occupied by tenant farmers, first managed by the John Logan family and then by the E.I. DuPont de Nemours Powder Company. The property continued to function as a tenant farm until 1914, after which Alfred I. DuPont's Blue Ball Dairy operation occupied the site until his death in 1935 (FIG. 3).

The Blue Ball Tavern site was located on the Chestnut Hill tract of the Penn family holdings known as Rockland Manor. This was obtained by Hans Peterson as a 1678 New Castle County Court warrant, and by a 1681 "Indian Deed." Between 1749 and 1755 Peterson's grandchildren sold their shares of Chestnut Hill to Joseph Mortonson, married to Peterson's granddaughter, Regina. Mortonson

may have been the first person to keep a tavern on the property, as in 1772 Regina is referred to as the "widow of Joseph Mortonson, Innkeeper." Nothing else is known of Joseph Mortonson's involvement with the tavern, but according to tavern license petitions, Regina Mortonson kept the Blue Ball Tavern at least from 1787 to 1799. Keeping a tavern was one of the few occupations available to women needing to support themselves and, although there was some uncertainty over their ability to govern their patrons' conduct, it was fairly common for widowed women to keep a tavern as an alternative to seeking public assistance. Nonetheless, it was generally a short-lived occupation for most women, usually lasting no more than five years, as they often "laid it away" if they remarried or had a son come live





Figure 2. Aerial photograph of the extant Blue Ball Dairy Barn and Blue Ball Tavern archaeological site location (Courtesy of DelDOT).



Figure 3. 1955 Photograph of the Tavern/House Structure (Courtesy of DelDOT).

with them (Rice 1983). The tavern license petitions indicate that, in addition to Regina Mortonson, several other area widows were tavernkeepers (TAB. 1), each able to briefly sustain their tavern operation.

Lancelot Law Smith took over the Blue Ball Tavern until 1807, when Thomas McKee petitioned to keep the "long accustomed Tavern house with appurtenances on the Concord Road lately occupied as house of Public entertainment" (TAB. 2). He continued as proprietor until 1810, when George Miller operated the tavern. During Miller's tenure public elections were held at the inn, it became known for its fine food, and it was first referred to with the name Blue Ball, in reference to a blue ball that was pulled up a pole to signal stagecoach drivers that passengers were to be picked up (Scharff 1888). After a three-year lapse Robert Galbreath petitioned in 1819 to keep the tavern "...which license had previously expired." Isaac Anderson was the last to keep the tavern,

Table 1. Widowed tavernkeepers in northern Delaware (Source: New Castle County Court of General Sessions: Tavern Petitions. Record Group 28085).

Widow	Tavern	License Petition
Regina Mortonson	Blue Ball Tavern	1772
Jane Elliot	"Mark Elliot's tavern"	1794
Mary Landers	Green Tree Inn	1799
Ann Weber	Practical Farmer	1805
"Charles Trute's widow"	Swan Inn	1808

Table 2. Blue Ball tavernkeepers (Source: New Castle County Court of General Sessions: Tavern Petitions. Record Group 28085).

Tavernkeeper	Dates
Regina Mortonson	1787-1799
Lancelot Law Smith	1799-1807
Thomas McKee	1807-1810
George Miller	1810-1816
Robert Galbreath	1819-1829
Isaac Anderson	1829-1850

known then as the Blue Ball Inn, where meetings of "the Friends of the Administration" were held.

### **Eighteenth and 19th-Century Taverns in Northern Delaware**

Tavernkeepers often simultaneously farmed or practiced a specialty trade, probably in order to generate sufficient income. For example, Edward Morris of the Vernon Tavern in southern Delaware was a shoemaker and general store keeper (Hagley Library Personal Accounts # 1108), Peter Springer of the Rising Son Tavern in Mill Creek Hundred was a "Saddler" (Thompson 1987), and Charles Trute of the Swan Inn in Wilmington was a piano maker (Ward 1968). The probate inventories of both Galbreath and Anderson of the Blue Ball, as well as that of Joseph Springer of the Rising Son indicate that they were farmers and likely blacksmithing and dairying, as well. In fact, Isaac Anderson's probate (transcribed in Wholey et. al. 2003: 249-250) specifically lists "a lot" of milking tools, "a lot" of blacksmith tools, and a blacksmith shop.

Some of these tavernkeepers were what have been described as professional, itinerant innkeepers, who did not own the property but

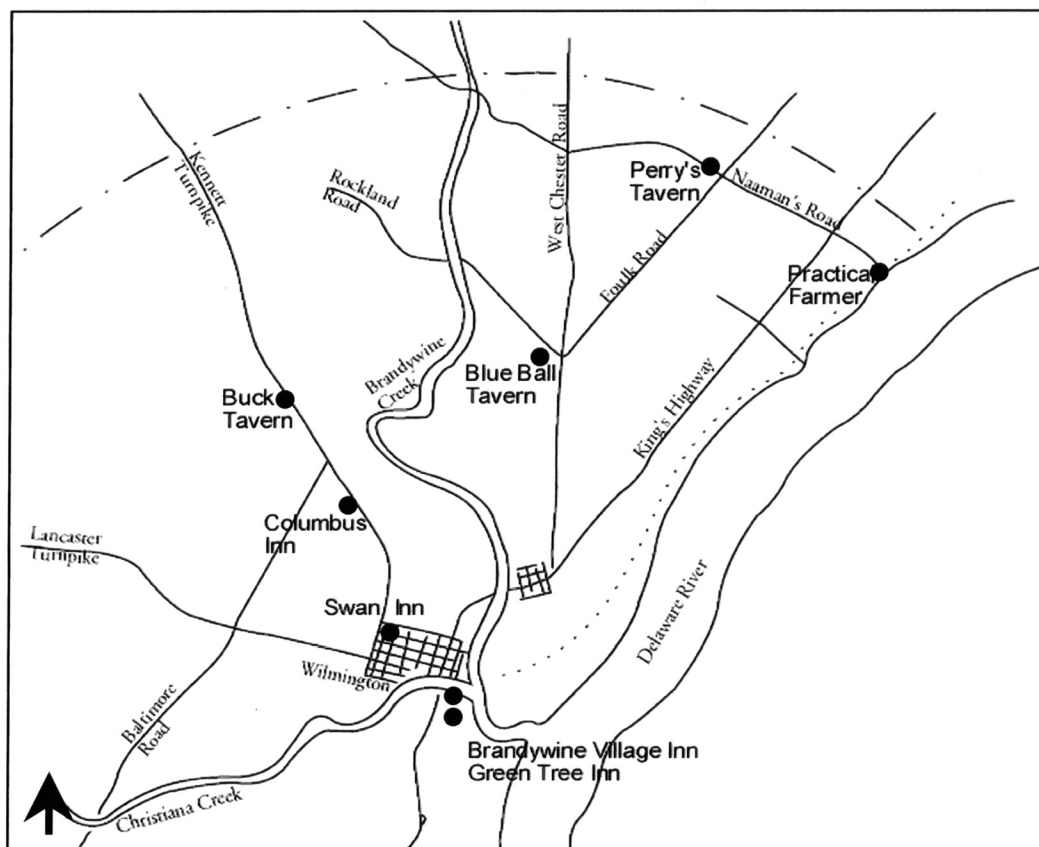


Figure 4. Some popular 18th- and 19th-century inns in the Wilmington, Delaware area (modified from Laird 1978). Not to scale.

simply operated the tavern and moved periodically between establishments (Michael 1973). This class of tavernkeepers has been identified from tavern license petitions, and in late-18th-century northern Delaware included Samuel Landers and Joseph Delany who moved between the Rising Son Tavern near Brandywine Bridge, the Practical Farmer on Naaman's Road, and the Green Tree Inn near the port of Wilmington; Robert Galbreath who moved from the Centerville Tavern just south of Wilmington on the Wilmington Turnpike to the Blue Ball Tavern; and, Isaac Anderson who moved from the Swan Inn to the Blue Ball Tavern. Another class of tavernkeeper is the owner-operator who, at the same time, included Ezra Evans at the White Horse Tavern, and Thomas Springer at the Three Tons Tavern. Those taverns appear to have only been in operation while associated with the owner-operator.

In Northern Delaware, taverns obviously accommodated different populations, such as the local community in rural production zones; politicians, businessmen, and workers in the urban centers; and, travelers at turnpike stops (Rockaman and Rothschild 1984) (FIG. 4). In addition to the Blue Ball stagecoach stopover, two early-19th-century taverns, the Green Tree Inn and the Brandywine Village Tavern, operated concurrently near the Port of Wilmington. The Brandywine Village Inn is reputed to have served fine meals and held convivial dances for elite Delawareans, whereas only blocks away the Green Tree is reported to have been an unsavory "grog shop," "liquor-bar," and "gambling house" that attracted rowdies from the flour mills and sailors off ships taking cargo to and from the Brandywine Mills (Ward 1968). These types of distinctions may have contributed to the development and mainte-

Table 3. Items from late-18th-century tavern ledgers (Hagley Library Personal Accounts. Daybook of Simon Marriner [1772–1775], and Daybook of Leonard Vandergrift [1780–1787]).

<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost</i>
gallon of beer	0.39 £
? spirits	0.20 £
dinner	0.36 and 0.76 £
one nights lodging	0.10 £
bowl of grog	0.3 £
gallon of rum	0.30 £
gallon of spirits	0.45 £
corn	0.15 £/bushel
buckwheat	0.11? £/bushel
tobacco	1 £/"hawling"
"China bowl broken"	1.50 £
day of labor	-.30 £

Table 4. Items from an early-19th-century tavern ledger (Hagley Library Personal Accounts. Daybook of Edward Morris [1823–1830]).

<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost</i>
serving of brandy	12? ¢
gallon of brandy	43? ¢
punch	25 ¢
pint of cider	3 ¢
quart of cider	6? ¢
lemonade	12? ¢
eggnog	21 ¢
meal	25 ¢
gallon of oats	12? ¢
one nights lodging	12? ¢
day of labor	\$1.00

nance of social boundaries among the local population.

Taverns further appear to have served as community centers. In addition to hosting the "Friends of the Administration" at Blue Ball, district school board meetings and elections were held at the Mermaid Tavern in Mill Creek Hundred, Swayne's Tavern in Pencader Hundred, the Red Lion Inn in Red Lion Hundred, and Covington's Tavern at Cantwell's Bridge (*Delaware Advertiser* 1830). Public sales and auctions were conducted at Black Bear and Plumleys' Taverns (*Delaware Advertiser* 1827, 1831). Political party meetings and elections were held at the Red Lion Inn (*Delaware Advertiser* 1831), and mares were brought to the Mermaid Tavern for studing (*Delaware Advertiser* 1830).

Ledgers and daybooks illustrate that the taverns' primary function was, however, to provide food, drink, and/or lodging. The daybooks of Simon Marriner (Hagley Library Personal Accounts # 954), and Leonard Vandergrift (Hagley Library Personal Accounts # 1047) of St. George's reveal items served in a typical late 18th century tavern. Common beverage purchases included grog, rum, sling, porter, milk toddy, apple toddy, beer, punch, gin bitters, brandy, and wine. Grog was commonly sold by the bowl, beer by the gallon, and spirits by "half servings." Breakfast or supper was a complete meal at one fixed price. Other items available for purchase included oysters, oats, bacon, corn, buckwheat, flour, and tobacco. Some payments were made in labor, charges were made for "china bowl broken," and mention was made of cash lent and unsettled debts (TAB. 3).

Edward Morris' 19th-century ledger from the Vernon Tavern (Hagley Library Personal Accounts # 1108) shows brandy, punch, cider, sherry, lemonade, and eggnog offered in small, gill, half pint, pint, quart, and gallon servings. "Meals" are listed, along with lamb, mutton, and oats. Payments were also made in labor, and note made of cash lent (TAB. 4). The 19th-century probate inventories for Joseph Springer of the Rising Son Tavern, and Robert Galbreath of the Blue Ball Tavern list barrels of whiskey, vinegar, and cider, casks of pickled pork and flour, bushels of corn, oats, and potatoes, doughtroughs, grind stones, meat tubs, and "hanging meat." The Blue Ball Tavern archaeological assemblage includes vessel remains for serving cider, flip, porter, wine, and brandy.

### Blue Ball Tavern Archaeology

Excavation at the Blue Ball site entailed the identification of the tavern/house foundation and 99 additional features. Each phase of the site's occupation and use (the tavern, the tenant farm, and the dairy operation) was represented archaeologically. The Blue Ball Tavern occupation is composed of two temporally discrete assemblages (FIG. 5 and TAB. 5). The earlier contexts (Blue Ball I) date up to the 1830s and include a portion of the stone foundation, a buried yard surface, and three pit features, while the later context (Blue Ball II) dates from

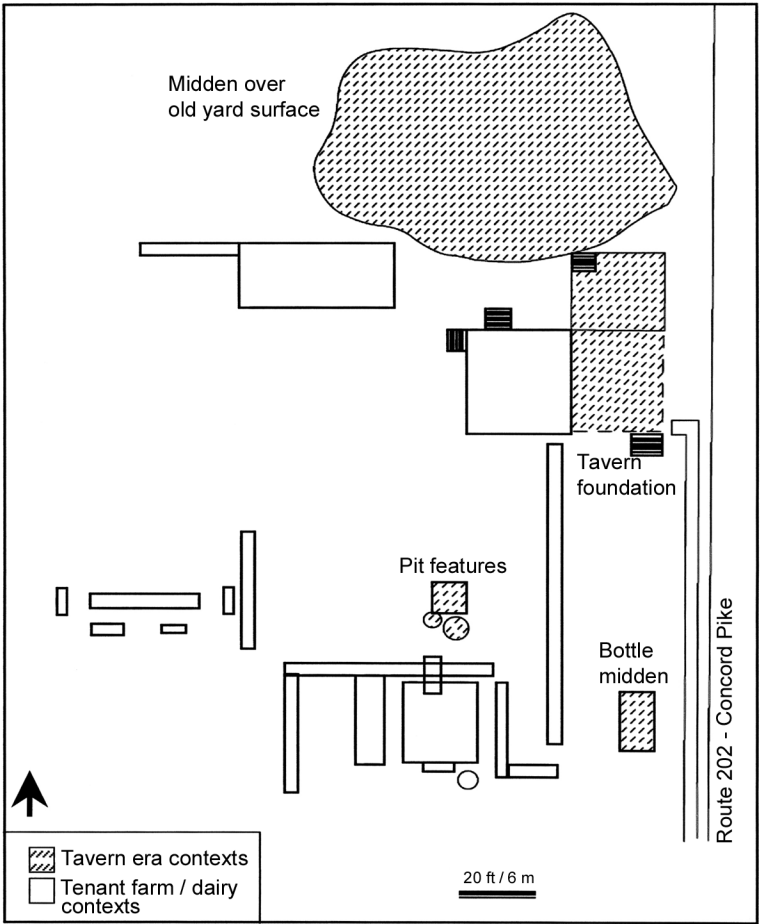


Figure 5. Site plan map of Blue Ball Tavern archaeological contexts (Wholey et. al. 2003).

the 1830s–1850s and consists of a small midden. Together the buried yard surface and three pit features yielded an average Mean Ceramic Date of 1803, and Mean Beginning and Ending Dates bracketing them between 1776 and 1829. As an accretional surface, the buried yard surface likely represents half a century of daily activity associated with the tavern’s occupation and operation. Two of the three pit features were 4 ft (1.2 m) square, 3 ft (0.9 m) deep flat bottomed pits. The third was an 8 ft (2.4 m) deep, 4 ft (1.2 m) diameter circular pit with a planked wood floor. The soil profile suggests that it may have been used for underground storage and ensilage, a process traditionally used to store fodder, root crops, and “brewers’ grains” in subterranean pits (Halsted 1881, Lanier and Herman 1997).

The Blue Ball Tavern I assemblage represents the time up through when Robert Galbreath ceased to be the tavern’s proprietor, but can mostly be attributed to George Miller’s and Galbreath’s early-19th-century tenures. Tables 6 and 7 summarize vessel forms and materials represented in the earlier tavern assemblage, which is comprised of typical early-19th-century domestic items (FIGS. 6 and 7), including creamware, pearlware, and redware cups, bowls, creamers, plates, saucers, chamber pots, and medicine bottles. The assemblage also consists of items that might be considered more tavern specific (FIGS. 8 and 9), such as ceramic mugs, tankards, jugs, bottles, crocks, bottle glass and glass tableware, case gin, brandy, wine, ale, and

porter bottles, snuff jars, and ink pots, as well as glass plates, tumblers, handled wine glasses, goblets, and flip glasses. As shown in Table 6, bottle glass and glass tableware constitute the majority of identifiable vessel forms, and ceramic plates, platters and the like outnumber the various ceramic hollow vessels present. Clay pipe fragments, a piece of jewelry box, a horseshoe, slate pencil, brass suspenders clasp, lamp chimney fragments, and other personal

Table 5. Blue Ball Tavern archaeological contexts (Wholey et. al. 2003).

Feature	MCD	Mean Beginning	Mean Ending	TPQ
Yard	1802	1773	1831	na
Pit (43)	1804	1779	1829	1810
Pit (91)	1805	1780	1830	1816
Pit (95)	1799	1767	1823	1780
Midden	1839	na	na	1890



Table 6. Percentage distribution of ceramic and glass artifact vessel forms recovered from the Blue Ball Tavern I assemblage (n=1185).

	<i>Refined Ceramics</i>	<i>Coarse Ceramics</i>	<i>Glass</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>preparation/service</i>				
flat vessel	4.9	2.7	0.8	7.6
teacup	0.8			0.8
mug/tankard/jug		0.3		0.3
bowl/crock	1.8	1.9	0.8	3.7
tumbler			17.2	17.2
wine/goblet			1.9	1.9
bottle			40.3	40.3
<i>other</i>				
chamber pot	3.1			3.1
medicine			4.1	4.1
tobacco	0.2		1.4	1.6
unidentified	7.6	9.1	1.4	18.1
Totals	18.5	13.5	68.0	



Figure 6. Pearlware cup recovered from a pit feature.

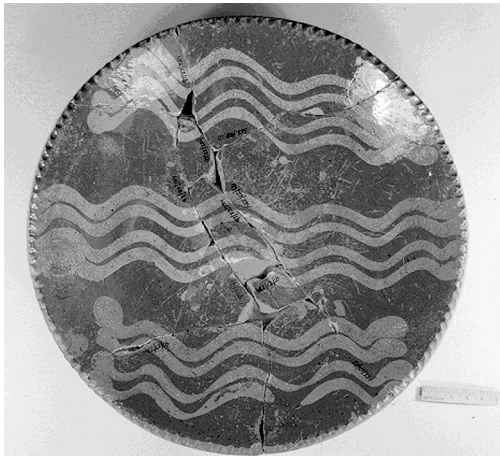


Figure 7. Redware plate recovered from a pit feature (Feature 43).

Table 7. Percentage distribution of ceramic and glass artifact vessel forms recovered from the Blue Ball Tavern II assemblage (n=223).

	<i>Refined Ceramics</i>	<i>Coarse Ceramics</i>	<i>Glass</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>preparation/service</i>				
flat vessel	2.2	0.8		3.0
teacup				0.0
mug/tankard/jug		0.4		0.4
bowl/crock	2.7	3.1		5.8
tumbler			1.8	1.8
wine/goblet				0.0
bottle			51.5	51.5
<i>other</i>				
chamber pot				0.0
medicine			0.9	0.9
tobacco	0.4			0.4
misc/unid	8.9	21.5	5.3	35.9
Totals	14.4	26	59.6	



Figure 8. Glass tumbler recovered from a pit feature (Feature 91).



Figure 9. Bottle glass recovered from a pit feature (Feature 43).

items were also recovered, as were small amounts of oyster shell and faunal remains.

The mean ceramic date for the Blue Ball Tavern II assemblage is 1839 with a frequency glass manufacture date of 1850 and a *terminus post quem* of 1890. This predominantly mid-19th-century context is interpreted as a secondary deposit representing a single clean-out episode that may have occurred during the renovations involved in converting the tavern to a tenant farmhouse. The assemblage mainly represents Isaac Anderson's tenure at the tavern (1828–1850), but was discarded during ownership by the E.I DuPont Powder Company. This assemblage was also comprised of both standard domestic items, such as whiteware, pearlware, and creamware crocks, plates, cups, bowls, and service platters, as well as more tavern specific items, such as spirits and mineral water bottles, medicine bottles, and. As shown in Table 7, bottle glass constitutes the majority of identifiable vessel forms, and ceramic hollow vessels, such as mugs, jugs, bowls, and crocks outnumber the ceramic plates, platters, and other serving dishes. A small quantity of clay pipe fragments, and faunal remains, including oyster and clamshell fragments, were also present. There is greater overall artifactual variety in the earlier tavern assemblage, as well as a greater proportion of service items, such as glass tableware, stemware, and tumblers. There is proportionately greater tobacco and glass tableware remains in the earlier tavern assemblage, and a greater proportion of bottle glass and unrefined ceramic vessels in the later tavern assemblage. Some of these differences, such as the proportional distribution of ceramic wares, may pertain to ethnicity (Spencer-Wood 1989), and economic status (Coleman et al 1990), yet it is probable that overall differences in these two assemblages are relevant to functions concerned with food preparation and service (Kelso 1984).

Table 8 is a diachronic comparison of artifact types and attributes pertinent to material function and/or socioeconomic status that also include the Blue Ball Tenant Farm component along with the earlier two tavern assemblages. The tenant farm assemblage is comprised of almost 7,500 artifact recovered from a soil midden overlaying the tavern yard surface. The trend appears as a proportionate increase in total ceramics and decline in total glass from the Tavern I to Tavern II and Tenant Farm

Table 8. General percentage composition of the Blue Ball Tavern Assemblages, based on artifact counts.

	Tavern I	Tavern II	Farm
<i>General composition</i>			
Ceramic	36	45	86
Glassware	62	55	13
Tobacco pipes & snuff pots	2	1	1
<i>Ceramic wares types</i>			
Coarse Ware	42	67	43
Refined Ware	58	34	57
<i>Ceramic vessel forms</i>			
Flat Vessel	19	6	18
Hollow Vessel	22	14	11
<i>Glass types</i>			
Bottle glass	68	96	91
Tableware	32	4	8

assemblages. Within those two material categories there is, however, similarity between the Tavern I and Tenant Farm course to refined ceramics ratio, and between the Tavern II and Tenant Farm proportion of bottle glass and glass tableware.

### Comparative Tavern Analysis

In addition to temporal intra-site differences at the Blue Ball Tavern, inter-site variation among the Blue Ball Tavern, the Rising Son Tavern (Thompson 1987), and the John Ruth Inn (Coleman 1990) artifact assemblages is apparent (TAB. 9), as is temporal intra-site variation at each of the two other tavern sites. Chronologically discrete contexts from three taverns form the basis for the following artifact analysis, which isolates items representative of an archaeological tavern assemblage. The analysis looks at the distribution of tobacco items (including clay smoking pipes and glass snuff pots), glass tableware, courseware ceramics (including redware, stoneware, and unrefined earthenware), and bottle glass from the 18th century Blue Ball I, Rising Son I, and John Ruth Inn I as well as from the 19th-century Blue Ball II, Rising Son II, and John Ruth Inn II.

Overall, the Blue Ball Tavern consists of proportionately greater bottle glass and lesser tobacco remains than the other two taverns. Similar to the Blue Ball, the other Rising Son and John Ruth Inn show an increase in bottle glass and decline in tobacco remains from the

Table 9. Percentage composition of tavern assemblages from different periods, comparing the Blue Ball Tavern, the Rising Son Tavern, and the John Ruth Inn (Wholey et. al. 2003). Percentages are derived from entire assemblages.

<i>Establishment</i>	<i>Tobacco</i>	<i>Glass Tableware</i>	<i>Coarse Wares</i>	<i>Bottle Glass</i>
Blue Ball I, MCD 1802	1	12	6	19
Blue Ball II, MCD 1839	0.2	1	11	24
Rising Son I, MCD 1766	3	1	46	11
Rising Son II, MCD 1822	1	2	15	20
John Ruth Inn I, MCD 1806	20	2	30	12
John Ruth Inn II, MCD 1820	10	3	4	15

Table 10. Comparison of tavernkeeper probate inventories showing the percentage value of listed goods by functional categories (Wholey et. al. 2003).

<i>Tavernkeeper, Tavern, Date</i>	<i>Kitchen</i>	<i>Lodging</i>	<i>Personal</i>	<i>Agriculture/ Tools</i>	<i>Total Value</i>
Regina Mortonson, Blue Ball, 1799	26	59	5	10	\$171.22
Samuel Landers, Green Tree, 1799	22	17	7	54	\$533.04
Peter Springer, Rising Son, 1805	15	33	3	49	\$559.25
Robert Galbreath, Blue Ball, 1829	17	21	5	57	\$472.05
Joseph Springer, Rising Son, 1831	5	12	1	82	\$378.90
Isaac Anderson, Blue Ball, 1850	4	11	0	85	\$681.85

earlier to later assemblages. Other studies, such as from the Cherry Valley Tavern in Burlington County, New Jersey (Hunter Research, Inc. 1994), have attributed a similar decline in frequency of tobacco pipes to a post-1812 shift in American tobacco use habits, whereby chewing tobacco (Heinmann 1960) and cigar smoking (Rice 1983) largely replaced pipe smoking. Further comparisons between these tavern assemblages and from further south, say Virginia or Maryland, as well as from urban areas, such as Philadelphia, may reveal more regarding regional patterns in tobacco use habits. In contrast to the Blue Ball the other two taverns show a decline in the presence of courseware ceramics, as well as a slight increase in glass tableware. Again, this could be pertinent to differential functions related to food preparation and service, or perhaps differences due to socioeconomic conditions.

Probate inventories are also valuable sources of information regarding the functioning and socioeconomic condition of a tavern during a given innkeepers tenure. Table 10 presents the relative monetary value of certain functional categories of material items held by six local tavernkeepers. These are Regina Mortonson, Robert Galbreath, and Isaac Anderson of the Blue Ball Tavern, a

stagecoach stop along a major transportation route used by commercial traffic, Samuel Landers of the semi-urban Green Tree Inn, and Peter and Joseph Springer of the rural Rising Son Tavern. This analysis reveals that there is a proportionally high representation of items in the agriculture/tools category for each tavernkeeper but Regina Mortonson, which could be a product of gender. Her investment in dining and lodging items is also much greater than the other tavernkeepers, including her contemporaries, Samuel Landers and Peter Springer, suggesting that during her term at the Blue Ball, the tavern was probably equipped to provide meals and, in particular, overnight accommodations. The other two 18th-century probates of Samuel Landers and Peter Springer, as well as the early-19th-century probate of Robert Galbreath are somewhat similar in terms of the relative distribution of goods among the four categories, although Landers' Green Tree operation may have been more focused on food and drink service than lodging. Joseph Springer and Isaac Anderson's mid-19th-century probates are similar in the considerable presence of agricultural items and tools, the low presence of personal items, and the distribution of items in the kitchen and lodging categories. Over time there is an overall increase in the proportional investment

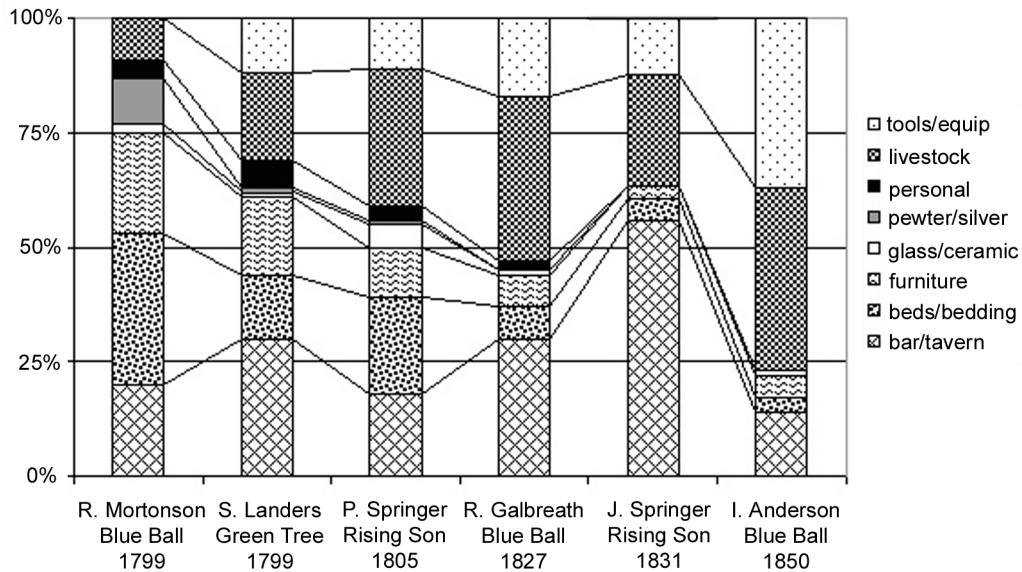


Figure 10. Comparison of tavernkeeper probate inventories showing proportional quantities of items by functional class. (Wholey et. al. 2003).

in agricultural items and tools, and decline in lodging and, particularly, kitchen items apparent at the Rising Son Tavern from the Peter to Joseph Springer estates, as well as at the Blue Ball Tavern from Robert Galbreath's to Isaac Anderson's estate.

Figure 10 illustrates the relative quantities of the probate items organized into categories, similar to those utilized in the John Ruth Inn analysis (Coleman et al. 1990), that pertain to tavern operations, lodging and parlor type functions, personal possessions, and agricultural pursuits. The analysis depicts significant spatial and temporal distinctions in the three tavern operations. The distribution of items among these categories may reveal something of the predominant function of the tavern establishment, as well as its venue as a so-called "ordinary," "grog shop," "public house," "inn," or even boarding house. For example barroom/tavern items include pots, pans, Dutch ovens, bottles, jugs, foodstuffs, casks, and the like. Items in the beds/bedding category including furniture items and accoutrements presumed to be associated with lodging, whereas items in the glass/ceramics and pewter/silver categories are presumed to relate to service and dining of one style or another. Agricultural indicators include items from both the livestock and tools/equipment category, the latter consisting of saws, spades,

ladders, scythes, plows, and crops in the ground, by the pound, or by the bushel, as well as special tools related to farm trades such as dairying and blacksmithing. Additionally, relative quantities of personal items, mainly consisting of clothing (apparel), but also bibles, jewelry, and in one case a dog, can address socioeconomic status.

Again, Mortonson's probate includes no agricultural items, along with the highest proportion of furnishings and provisions related to lodging. She also, however, is shown to have held the greatest quantity of goods, such as pewter and silver, and glass and ceramic food preparation and storage items. The distribution of goods in the tavern, lodging and dining areas indicate that under her tenure, the Blue Ball served meals, drink, and provided overnight lodging, probably to travelers. Given the length of Mortonson's involvement with the tavern, she and the establishment must have been reasonably successful. While Landers' probate also indicates that the Green Tree provided a full range of tavern services, the majority of his belongings, such as cider casks and pickle tubs, represent food and bar service rather than lodging. That pattern, along with the relatively large quantity of personal possession, mostly clothing, probably pertains to the tavern's semi-urban setting and purported role as a locals' "grog-room."



Peter Springer's probate included an assortment of beds, bedding, tables, chairs, tableware, glass and ceramic wares indicating that in the late 18th century the Rising Son Tavern was also equipped to provide some lodging, food and drink, yet perhaps in a more rural fashion and not of the same capacity or style indicated at Blue Ball. About one third of Springer's probate consisted of livestock and agricultural goods, including saddles, ticking, bagging and linen, likely related to his sideline occupation as a saddler. The Rising Son Tavern appears to have undergone a functional reorganization in transition from father to son. While Joseph Springer's probate indicates a significant holding of goods related to agricultural production, and included a large assemblage of tools, livestock and crops in the ground, the great majority of the inventory consisted of barware. The tavern appears to have been barely equipped for food service and the provision of overnight accommodations. It may be that at the time, the tavern primarily serviced the local rural community for drink and entertainment.

The two 19th-century Blue Ball inventories suggest that agriculture as well as specialty trades were integral to and perhaps of greater importance than the tavern operations. Over half of Robert Galbreath's inventory encompassed a large assortment of farm implements listed "in the barn," as well as livestock, and crops in the ground. Some of the tools, such as anvils, mallets, wedges, vice, cotter and mold-board, hammers, and scrue [*sic.*] plates seem to indicate blacksmithing, a service perhaps provided for travelers. Items listed "in the bar," such as barrel of sides [*sic.*], liquor, and whiskey, comprise the greatest proportion of non-agricultural goods. From Regina Mortonson to Robert Galbreath, the Blue Ball Tavern experienced a reprioritization in composition and function.

This trend continues into Isaac Anderson's term at the tavern, as over three-quarters of his probate includes agricultural implements and goods. His probate explicitly documented a kitchen, dining room, barr room [*sic.*], cellar, bedrooms, as well as the presence of facilities for raising chickens, a slaughterhouse, a blacksmith shop, and a barn. The extensive list of blacksmithing implements, agricultural equipment, livestock, crops in the ground, and tools possibly related to dairying is evidence for a

greatly expanded agricultural undertaking. Nonetheless, some furnishings and implements were still available to provide lodging and dining. The barre [*sic.*] room was probably the focus of the tavern operation at the time, as its inventory of decanters, bar glass, liquor and whiskey barrels, chairs, benches and a table comprised the greatest proportion of the tavern functions. Taken in 1850, Isaac Anderson's probate appears to demonstrate Delaware's 19th-century trend toward agricultural intensification and diversification.

### Socioeconomic Influences

Although taverns served many important functions, their presence was not always well received. The temperance movement was well under way in New Castle County by the 1830s, a time noted for increased per capita alcohol consumption (Rorabaugh 1987, Reckner and Brighton 1999). Mention of the Wilmington Temperance Society appears as early as 1827 in the *Delaware Advertiser*, and in 1830 and 1831 advertisements for their meetings lists doctors, Protestant ministers, and a judge as members. By 1831 there were over two hundred members of the Brandywine Temperance Association, many of whom were women. The 1839 *Delaware Gazette* article "Advise to Drunkards" rebukes the use of alcohol, warning of the "deleterious" effects of "ardent spirits...flavor imparted by a mixture of noxious drugs." It further advises that "the best place of all to get drunk is at home, preferably on the ground floor or...cellar; for then you will not fall down stairs, breaking...your head or your shins" and "where you can be attended to by your own family."

In New Castle County, petitions for tavern license declines and in 1832 licenses for keeping a "temperance house" cost a third the price of a tavern license. Many temperance advocates accused politicians of using free liquor at their rallies to attract support, and in 1839 the Temperance movement had formed its own political party. The Temperance party first ran candidates in a Wilmington City election, and then in state elections in 1850 (Munroe 1979). Many states voted in liquor prohibitions during the 1850s, including Delaware, who passed a prohibition law in 1855. Although this law was repealed soon after it was passed, it appears that more limited function establishments had replaced the

multi-functional taverns. Listings in the 1860's Delaware state directories are for hotels, restaurants, "lager beer saloons," and "porter houses," implying a separation of services, some of which was probably also vestiges of the temperance movement, where more moderate factions tolerated the modest consumption of "low alcohol" beers and lager beers (Reckner and Brighton 1999).

At the same time, in response to mid-19th-century transportation improvements and a growth in manufacturing, agricultural production in the Delaware and surrounding Piedmont area expanded beyond staple export crops such as corn, wheat, oats, and other grains, to include lumbering, dairy production, perishable market gardening, wool production, and livestock fattening (Lindstrom 1978; DeCunzo and Garcia 1992). This shift continued into the 20th century, and was facilitated by transportation revolutions, such as the construction of the Delaware railroad that enabled the movement of product to markets across Delaware and throughout much of the Middle Atlantic.

Contemporaneously, the transformation of many of the major roads to turnpikes, the growth of commerce, industry, and urbanization in the Piedmont and Upper Delaware Peninsula (DeCunzo and Catts 1990), and the decrease in overland transportation and the construction of railroads, seem to coincide with the demise of many taverns.

## Conclusion

Early American taverns offered an important range of services and fulfilled diverse community niches, the particular combination of which would have been influenced by factors such as location, demand, community needs, the socioeconomic status of the proprietor and clientele, and the degree to which the proprietor was economically dependent on the tavern business. By the middle to late 1800s, however, many Delaware taverns were adapted as tenant farms, the role of the tavern as a multi-faceted public institution declined, and the tavern keeper as symbol of community was eclipsed.

The reason for these changes appears to have been due to several converging factors. During this time the construction of railroads took much of the commercial traffic from the turnpikes. In fact, a major railroad was com-

pleted in 1838 that linked Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore, and quickly became the major transportation route across the Delmarva Peninsula. Transportation improvements played an essential role in the development of agriculture, commerce and industry, and increased demands of an urban market for farm produce. Large scale agricultural reform initiated in the 1830s throughout most of Delaware also produced farms with larger capital investments in improvements. This could be seen by the 1860's in northern New Castle County in farms that had more special purpose farm outbuildings and more tenant specific housing (DeCunzo and Garcia 1992). At the same time, Delaware's evolving regional socioeconomic landscape also included the temperance movement.

The effect of these developments was a regional decrease in the popularity of taverns, although their local popularity continued, and the services of the stable-keepers and blacksmiths who often lived nearby in some cases slowed the demise of the taverns (Michael 1973). Decreased priority in maintaining a high quality tavern service inventory is apparent from both probate and archaeological sources. Although the Blue Ball Tavern appeared to have generally remained equipped to provide a full range of tavern services into the mid-19th century, it also followed a broader trend whereby increasingly larger proportions of resources were invested into agricultural pursuits rather than the tavern business. According to Scharff (1888), the Blue Ball "building was enlarged and converted into a farmhouse, thus removing the old landmark."

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