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Cover Page Footnote

I would like to thank Mary C. Beaudry for bringing this site to my attention, allowing me to work on the material she excavated, and commenting on the text. Stephen Mrozowski and the staff at the UMass Boston archaeology labs have been extremely helpful in facilitating work on Mrozowski's collection from the site. Thanks are also due to Karen Metheny, AnnEliza Lewis, David Landon, William Schmitt, David Matheu, and anonymous reviewers who made valuable suggestions on various drafts of the paper. Analysis of this site is ongoing, and I am solely responsible for any errors that have been presented at this stage.

The Social and Material Lives of the Agricultural Elite: The 18th-Century Tyngs of Dunstable, Massachusetts

Christa M. Beranek

The Tyngs were a wealthy family in Dunstable (now Tyngsborough), Massachusetts in the late-17th and 18th centuries. They were descended from a Boston merchant, and maintained many commercial connections. Some members of the family became rural storekeepers in Dunstable. Historical research and archaeological data from Eleazer Tyng's house site show the different ways in which the Tyngs related themselves to the urban coastal elite, and participated in the culture of gentility and refinement. Through architecture, social connections, and material goods such as tea wares, they lived as rural elites with connections to the coast. Rather than directly mimicking the life of Boston elites, the Tyngs adapted gentility to their rural life and agrarian base.

Les Tyngs étaient une famille riche de Dunstable (maintenant appelé Tyngsborough) au Massachusetts à la fin du XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècles. Descendants d'un marchand de Boston, ils avaient conservé plusieurs relations commerciales. Certains membres de la famille sont devenus des marchands en milieu rural à Dunstable. Les recherches historiques et les données archéologiques du site de la maison de Eleazer Tyng démontrent les différentes façons dont les Tyngs se liaient à l'élite urbaine côtière et participaient à une culture de bienséance et de raffinement. À travers l'architecture, les relations sociales et les biens matériels tels les services à thé, ils vivaient comme des gens de l'élite rurale ayant des rapports avec la côte. Au lieu d'imiter exactement la vie de l'élite bostonienne, les Tyngs ont adapté leur bienséance à leur vie rurale et leur milieu agraire.

Introduction

Urban, coastal society in New England in the 18th century was dominated by a class of merchant elites (Goodwin 1999; Labaree 1962: 1). These merchants and their families have received both historical (Heyrman 1984, Hunter 2001), and more recently, archaeological attention (Beaudry 1995; Goodwin 1994, 1999; Harrington 1989). In particular, Lorinda Goodwin, in *An Archaeology of Manners*, studied how coastal merchants used mannerly behavior and its associated material trappings to help to identify and define themselves as a group (Goodwin 1999). They went to great expense to construct and furnish homes suitable for fashionable, private entertaining, and sponsored urban activities such as gentlemen's clubs and assemblies for socializing and display in the public sphere (Hunter 2001: 110–111, 142).

Historians describe a growing divide between urban merchants and rural yeoman farmers during the 18th century, proposing that the merchants identified themselves as members of a trans-Atlantic gentry, more closely tied to the British provincial gentry

than to Yankee yeomen farmers (Hunter 2001: 9; Labaree 1979: 159, 165). But how were the elite of rural towns behaving? Were they adopting refinements similar to those of the coastal merchants? What was their social relationship to the urban elite? Without the urban environment to provide social events for display and with fewer socioeconomic peers to interact with, what material refinements did they adopt and how did they use them? How did the Tyngs living in the small town of Dunstable, almost on the edge of the settled frontier, fit into the picture of Massachusetts' elite? This paper examines the ways in which the Tyngs interacted socially and through material culture with the merchant community, and the ways in which they differed from them.

Although the coastal merchants have begun to receive archaeological attention, the inland elite and their commercial connections are not as well studied (however, see Nobles 1990; Sweeney 1984, 1986 for historical works). Examples of the inland elite, the Tyng family lived in the part of Dunstable, Massachusetts, that is now Tyngsborough (FIG. 1). Descended from Edward Tyng, a Boston merchant of the

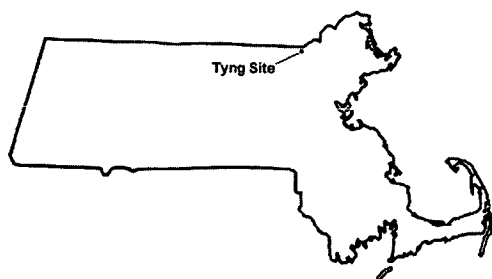


Figure 1. Massachusetts showing site location.

mid-17th century, they were among the town's founders in the late-17th century, and some of its largest landholders throughout the 18th century. This paper is a preliminary study examining the later-18th-century Tyngs, in order to begin to study the inland elite and to answer questions about what kind of relationships they maintained with the urban, coastal merchants and their developing culture of refinement and mannerly behavior. The archaeological data come from the property of Eleazer Tyng, site of the Tyng Mansion, excavated in 1980 and 1982, and are combined with historical and architectural information. Analysis of the site is ongoing, and further archaeological testing was carried out in 2002. This paper, however, is an initial attempt based on the early fieldwork to pose questions and suggest answers that will be extended in future research.

Background

Located about 35 miles from Boston, Dunstable was first settled in the 1660s by wealthy Bostonians who obtained large parcels of land (Nason 1877: 8) and incorporated as a town in 1673. At that time it included 200 square miles east and west of the Merrimack River in the present towns of Dunstable and Tyngsborough, parts of the surrounding towns, as well as land now in southern New Hampshire. The area had rich agricultural potential, and was well situated for the fur and timber trades. It remained a sparsely populated frontier region because of King Phillip's War, Queen Anne's War, and other conflicts with the Native Americans until the 1730s, after which the population increased (Nason 1877: 55). Compared to other towns in the area, however, the population of Dunstable was small. In 1765, the adjoining

towns of Groton and Chelmsford each had more than 1000 residents, while Dunstable had fewer than 600 (Benton 1905).

Edward Tyng, a Boston merchant (Bailyn 1979), was one of the original European landowners in Dunstable. His son Colonel Jonathan Tyng, and his family (FIG. 2), were some of the town's first settlers. They owned land throughout the town, but primarily in a 1 × 6 mile (~1.7 × 9.7 km) tract on the west side of the Merrimack, just upriver from Tyng or Wicasuck Island. Jonathan divided the land between his sons, Eleazer and William (Middlesex County Probate 1720). The parcel owned by Eleazer contained at least two colonial houses and has been the subject of archaeological investigations.

Field Investigations

Stephen Mrozowski, in 1980, and Mary C. Beaudry, in 1982, conducted field excavations that sought the evidence for these structures, referred to here as Structure 1 and Structure 2. The more recent of the houses (Structure 2) was known as the Tyng Mansion and stood until 1979. After the house burned down in 1979, the property owners hired Mrozowski to excavate around the foundation to determine

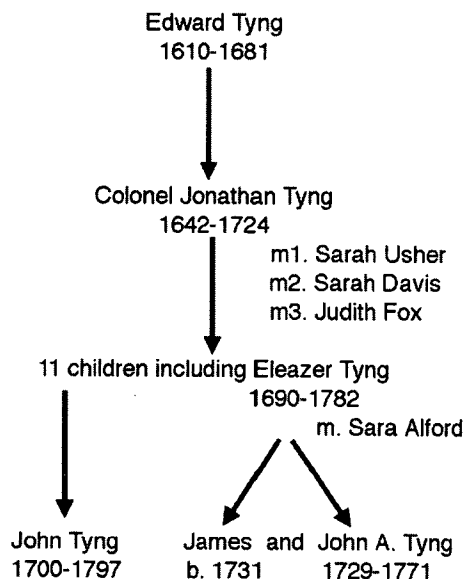


Figure 2. Relationships between the primary individuals mentioned in the text.

the date of construction and to find information about the Tyngs (Mrozowski 1980). Local tradition maintained that the mansion house was built in the 1690s by Jonathan Tyng. Mrozowski argues that there is evidence for an early-18th-century construction phase, with additional construction in the mid-18th century (Mrozowski 1980), however this evidence has been disputed (Wamsley 1982: 5-6). Based on architectural style and preliminary re-analysis of the excavated artifacts, it seems that the Mansion, in the form that stood until the 20th century, was most likely built by Jonathan's son or grandson around 1760. Further analysis needs to be done to determine if an earlier structure stood at that site. Mrozowski's artifact assemblage consists of domestic and architectural material from around the Tyng Mansion (Structure 2), as well as material from test units across the property. This material is being analyzed in my ongoing work, but is not considered in this study.

Mrozowski also discovered the foundations of another building (Structure 1), roughly 34 m south of the mansion. The stone foundation was exposed, and two quadrants of the roughly 22 x 26 ft (6.7 x 7.9 m) cellar hole were partially excavated in 1982 by Dr. Mary C. Beaudry and a Boston University field school (Beaudry 1982). The cellar belonged to an older structure, of unknown date. The plow zone over the cellar contained very small quantities of 19th-century materials mixed with larger amounts of 18th-century artifacts. Below the plow zone, the cellar had two undisturbed layers. The lower stratum was a destruction layer containing plaster and other architectural materials from the destruction of

the superstructure, as well as ceramic and glass artifacts. Overlying the destruction layer was a fill layer that contained artifacts that appear to be redeposited sheet refuse, based on their uniformly small size. The cellar fill contains a small amount of creamware, giving it a terminus post quem of the mid to late 1760s, but no china glaze or pearlware, indicating that it was probably filled prior to 1775. Red earthenware and white salt-glazed stoneware are the primary ceramic categories represented. Fragments of a green glass wine bottle from the lower destruction layer and the upper fill layer cross-mend (although few other artifacts do), suggesting that the cellar was filled rapidly in a single episode.

Structures 1 and 2 are relatively close to each other (less than 35 m apart), and deed research has shown that both structures are on land that belonged to the Tyngs until the last decade of the 18th century (Wamsley 1982). The destruction of Structure 1 and filling of its cellar are roughly contemporary with the construction of the Tyng Mansion (Structure 2). The artifacts in the fill of Structure 1, and Structure 2 itself can both be associated with the household of Eleazer Tyng who owned the property until his death in 1782. The analysis conducted in this paper is based on the artifacts excavated by Beaudry in 1982 from the fill of Structure 1 and the overlying plowzone (TAB. 1), and on photographs of the Tyng Mansion (Structure 2) prior to its destruction.

The Tyng Family

In addition to being large landowners, the Tyngs, beginning with Jonathan, were important figures in Dunstable's political and military history. Their names appear frequently on colony and local documents, and they were unquestionably town leaders. In the 1760s and early 1770s, there were four Tyng families in Dunstable, that of Eleazer, those of his sons James Tyng and John Alford Tyng, and that of his nephew John Tyng, who was close to Eleazer's age. These four contemporary families were some of the wealthiest in Dunstable, with James and John Alford having the highest real estate taxes in the town in 1765, and John and Eleazer close behind (Paiva 1993: 31). On the Massachusetts Tax Valuation List of 1771

Table 1. Percent breakdown of the Beaudry collection, based on number of artifacts.

<i>Artifact Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
vessel glass	923	5.08
window glass	4794	26.37
ceramic vessels	8976	49.38
ceramic pipes	1463	8.05
bricks	375	2.06
metal	1328	7.31
organic	54	0.30
mineral	261	1.44
synthetic	4	0.02
Total	18178	100.00

(after John Alford's death in 1770), John, James, and Eleazer are again three of the five wealthiest individuals in Dunstable (Pruitt 1978: 204–207), both in terms of real estate value and agricultural production (TAB. 2). Out of 133 heads of household on the tax list, Eleazer was one of only three who owned slaves. In addition, James and John were two of the 17 people who owned shops or mills of some type (Pruitt 1978: 204–207). Eleazer was a Colonel in the Middlesex County militia, a Justice of the Peace, and served on numerous town committees; John was a judge, and a representative from Dunstable to the colony's General Court, John Alford was active in the county's militia; and James was chosen as one of Dunstable's representative to the Provincial Congresses. In terms of their social and political roles in the community, as well as the value of their property, the Tyngs were one of the town's powerful and elite families.

Merchant Associations

While the Tyngs of the late-18th century were not all merchants themselves, the family had a number of connections with the merchant world. Edward, the 17th-century founder of the Dunstable branch of the family, was a wealthy and prominent Boston merchant. His son, Colonel Jonathan Tyng, who lived in Dunstable, married Sarah Usher, daughter of another Boston merchant (Bailyn 1979: 136). He had two later marriages, also to women from Boston merchant families (Beaudry 1984: 55). In addition, Jonathan was made manager of the fur trade with the Pennacook Indians along the Merrimack River (Beaudry 1982: 8), a position which would

have kept him in contact with the Boston merchant community.

These business connections were continued by the four Tyngs of the later-18th century: Eleazer, James, John Alford, and John. John Tyng lived in Boston at times and was a merchant there (Bradford 1842: 403), which may explain the 200 pounds worth of merchandise listed on the 1771 Tax Valuation (Pruitt 1978: 206). James Tyng was involved in local commerce and as he owned two shops in Dunstable at the time of the 1771 tax (Pruitt 1978: 206). These are probably the shops that he inherited from his father in a 1759 deed, described at that time as a "shop keepers shop and a shoe makers shop" (Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Northern Registry 2: 421).

Tangible evidence of trade from the Tyng Mansion site comes from a cloth bale seal, from the London cloth trade (Egan 1994), and a three-scruple scale weight, both uncovered during Beaudry's excavations of Structure 1 (FIG. 3). Huge numbers of pipe stem fragments (1463 fragments, just over 8% of the artifacts from Beaudry's excavation) recovered from throughout the cellar fill suggest that Eleazer may have been receiving pipes in bulk for further redistribution, discarding broken ones on site. None of the mouthpieces exhibit tooth marks or other wear, and most of the bowl and stem fragments are unblackened from smoke, which also suggests that they were discarded before use. Almost all of the marked examples exhibit the TD mark on either side of the heel.

When looking at these inland elites with merchant connections, it is important to note that they were not as wealthy as the coastal merchants, and that their wealth was of a different type (Sweeney 1984: 233). It was primarily in land, animals, and agriculture. All of the

Table 2. Real estate and agricultural data for the wealthiest five families in Dunstable, according to the Massachusetts Tax Valuation List of 1771.

Name	Value of Real Estate	Shops	Value of Merchandise	Animals	Bushels of Wheat	Barrels of Cider
William Gordon	17/5	Shop, potash works	500	26	200	30
Eleazer Tyng	17/6			43	200	40
John Perham	17/10			37	300	20
James Tyng	23/14	2 shops		33	150	15
John Tyng	27/14	Potash works	200	105	100	20
Town Average				11.1	49.6	6.8

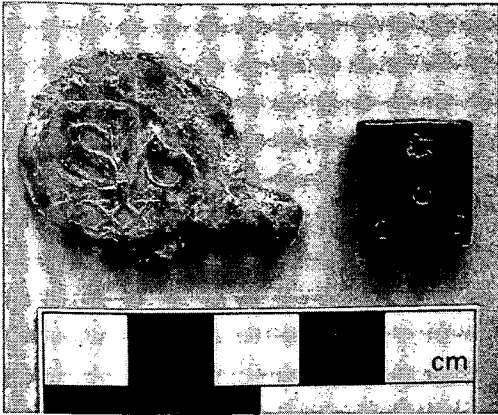


Figure 3. Lead seal for a bale of cloth and a three-scruple scale weight showing three dots and a lion.

Tyngs derived much of their wealth from their large landholding and their farm activities. Even John and James Tyng, who were merchants, produced 100 and 150 bushels of grain respectively, well over the 50-bushel average for Dunstable. John Tyng also kept 80 sheep, more than three times as many as the next largest flock of 25 sheep belonging to Eleazer Tyng (Pruitt 1978: 207). The Tyngs were not simply urban merchants or shopkeepers transplanted to the countryside, but were people with substantial investments in agricultural production. In their combined role as agricultural producers, merchants, and people with personal ties to Boston and Newburyport families, the Tyngs, as well as the other elites of Dunstable, probably served as economic middlemen for a wide variety of local and regional transactions (cf. De Cunzio 1995; Sweeney 1986). The Tyngs' behavior may have been similar to that of the Williams family from the Connecticut River Valley, inland merchants who held similar political and military offices. The Williams family acted as mediators between the town and the larger world. They were instrumental in introducing agricultural innovations, facilitating local and regional commerce, organizing labor, and bringing goods into the town through their shops (Sweeney 1986).

If the Tyngs and other "gentlemen farmers" did adopt some of the same refinements as the coastal merchants, how did they change them to suit their rural, agrarian setting? A study by Kevin Sweeney of houses

built by merchants in the Connecticut River Valley of western Massachusetts shows that while the merchants there shared the goal of setting themselves apart as a group with coastal merchants, the western Massachusetts merchants went about it differently (Sweeney 1984). The Connecticut River Valley merchants built houses that were similar to each others', and stood out from the rest of the local population's houses, but were not copies of contemporary merchants' houses in Boston. While they used some of the same Georgian elements, they were used in non-traditional ways, or combined with distinct local designs.

Sweeney suggests that this variance from Boston style is a deliberate attempt by the Connecticut River merchants to establish themselves as their own group, and not a result of inferior, uninformed, or inadequate craftsmanship (Sweeney 1984). Sweeney's case study highlights that gentility is not expressed uniformly, and that variations often have significance for the local contexts in which they are produced and used. The Connecticut Valley variation on an urban architectural form served to create a group that was easily associated through visible symbols both to group members and non-members. It also showed that the local elites were capable of producing a high-style form without strict and simple imitation of the urban style.

Connections to the Coast: Social, Architectural, Material

The Tyngs actively maintained connections to Boston in a number of ways: through social interactions, architecture, and to some extent the material culture of refinement. One of the social ways of maintaining connections was through marriage. As mentioned earlier, Jonathan Tyng had married the daughters of several prominent merchants. Eleazer also married in Boston, suggesting that he connected himself to particular social circles through marriage. The Tyngs formed other social connections through education. A number of Newburyport, Massachusetts merchants' sons attended Harvard College, and as

one author states, "Social prestige and cohesiveness were as much the result as erudition" (Labaree 1962: 8). Eleazer and John Tyng both attended Harvard, where they would have met the rising generation of Boston and Newburyport merchants, and had an opportunity to become part of a colony-wide social network. These social connections through marriage and education may have been possible because of the family's descent from Edward Tyng, the 17th-century Boston merchant. The Tyngs were from an established merchant family; they were not a new family trying to break into the Boston social circle, a feat that was much more difficult (Goodwin 1999: 63–64).

By the later-18th century, Eleazer Tyng also had some highly visible material signs of his family's status and connections with urban gentility. The most prominent for the other residents of Dunstable would have been his

house, the Tyng Mansion (FIG. 4). As mentioned earlier there is disagreement over the date of construction, but based on its architectural style, well-integrated floor plan, and dates of the ceramic deposits, the house that stood until 1979 was probably built in the 1760s. The house was Georgian, with a central hall, four additional rooms on each floor, a five-bay façade, and a gambrel roof (National Register 1977). No floor plan of the house has survived, but it was probably similar to other central hall houses from the time period, such as the example shown in Figure 5. It was two stories and an attic, so would have been very striking in its location on a rise above the Merrimack River and River Road. Based on a few surviving photographs of the interior, the central hall had a straight run stairway with elaborately carved balusters. Paneling covered the walls of the hall and the fireplace walls of the second floor rooms (the only rooms for



Figure 4. The Tyng Mansion before its destruction in 1979. The porch is a late-19th or early-20th-century addition. Historic American Buildings Survey photograph by Arthur C. Haskell (HABS MASS 9-Tyng, 3-1) on file at the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

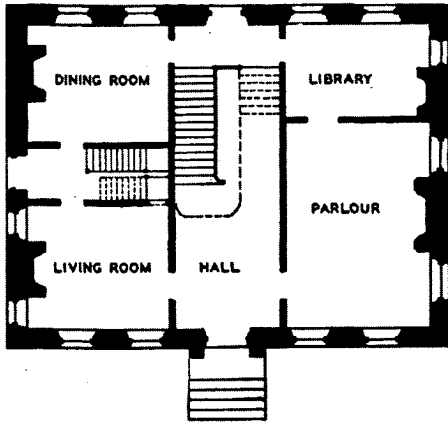


Figure 5. Example of a Georgian, central hall floor plan, with four additional rooms per floor. This example in the Hancock House, Boston, MA (Morrison 1952: 483).

which photographs are available). Eleazer Tyng chose a triangular pediment to ornament the exterior of the front door and Georgian ornamentation for the fireplaces. The National Register nomination for the house also reports that the fireplaces were surrounded with blue and white tin-glazed tiles, which may be illustrated by fragments that the excavators recovered in the cellar fill of Structure 1.

The central hall plan gives controlled access to the different rooms, each of which had a separate function such as working, cooking, dining, sleeping, or entertaining. This plan and this segregation of activities is associated with refinement, wealth, and social entertaining, which took place in spaces that were separated from work and cooking areas, or where servants or slaves ate and slept. The different treatment of the fireplace surrounds in the two rooms for which photographs exist suggests that there was such a hierarchy of interior space. The rooms that Tyngs' slaves and farm workers used would be different from ones that valued guests might see. This interior elaboration suggests that Eleazer may have expected to hold formal entertainment at his house. The interior of his house was designed to convey a powerful social message to everyone who worked at or visited the house.

This plan with a central hall through the whole length of the house and four rooms per floor was rare in New England in the 18th century and was only present in the "grandest houses" (Bushman 1992: 115). Coastal merchants and other urban elites used it in their houses, but it was rare in the countryside in the 18th century. The Tyngs' use of this plan would have been a visual association with urban lifestyle. The house was built late in Eleazer's life, after the town was stable, no longer under threat of Native attack, and after the population had grown. To the whole town, whether they were aware of the Tyngs social connections or not, the house would have been a striking and highly visible statement of prestige.

Excavations revealed that Eleazer also had some other material goods that can be identified with refinement and mannerly behavior. Goodwin, in her study, identifies the areas of dress and personal adornment, social drinking, dining, and novelty foods as areas of expression for this behavior (Goodwin 1999: 99–156). The majority of the ceramics from the Tyng site are red earthenwares, but among the more refined wares are white salt-glazed stoneware, scratch blue stoneware, Nottingham-type stoneware, creamware, and Chinese porcelain. All of the ceramics are in very small fragments, making it difficult to determine a specific vessel form for many of them. It does appear that most of the refined ware was used for drinking tea or other beverages. There are fragments of a creamware cup, white salt-glazed bowls and saucers, a scratch blue saucer and tea bowl, and a white salt-glazed teapot. The porcelain fragments are too small to determine what kind of vessel they came from, but were probably also associated with tea drinking. The additional creamware pieces do not represent more than two or three plates, and although the MNV for stoneware is 24, most of the identifiable pieces are bowls, mugs, or saucers, with only 1 or possibly 2 representing plates, so there is little ceramic evidence for refined dining. Very little faunal

material was recovered, so analysis of what the Tyng household was eating is not possible. Consumption of alcoholic beverages is implied by a number of green glass wine bottles, and some ceramic mugs in redware, Nottingham-type stoneware, and Westerwald stoneware. There is little evidence of table glassware, such as wine glasses, in the undisturbed layers of the fill of Structure 1. There is no evidence for other vessel types that Goodwin associates with celebratory drinking such as punch bowls and decanters (Goodwin 1999: 134–137).

As Goodwin (1999: 124) and others have pointed out, the simple presence of a tea bowl or teapot does not mean that tea was taken in a genteel fashion. Corroborative evidence is needed to connect individual pieces of ceramics with genteel practices. In the case of the Tyngs, the presence of multiple tea vessels in several wares (stoneware, porcelain, and creamware) in conjunction with a house form so strongly associated with gentility and the segregation of activities into appropriate spaces suggests a commitment to tea taking as a repeated and formalized activity. Gathering for tea is also consistent with evidence from Sweeney's (1984) documentary study of the types of social behavior in which rural elites engaged.

The archaeological evidence suggests that the Tyngs participated in the mannerly behaviors of the coastal elite, but in a limited and selective fashion. The predominance of small tea bowls, cups, and a tea pot over plates or other special function ceramics for dining or celebratory drinking indicates that smaller gatherings for tea took place, while elaborate dining in large groups may not have. Alcoholic beverages were present but were consumed mainly in mugs, without the punch bowls, decanters, and stemware suggestive of formal dinnertime toasts and celebratory drinking. Eleazer was certainly aware of the kinds of goods imported to Boston and Newburyport because of his nephew's position as a merchant and his own movement between Boston, Cambridge, and Dunstable as part of his political and military duties. The presence of the creamware plates and some

other creamware items on the site indicates that Eleazer purchased some of this new and fashionable ware soon after it was available in the colonies, but seemingly in small quantities. The scarcity of dining items, and table glassware was therefore not the result of a lack of knowledge about the latest goods or to inaccessibility, but to some choice by Eleazer's household. He may have wanted to avoid the cost of these wares, but a more likely hypothesis is that they may not have been useful for the kinds of social interactions that he had on a rural farm. Sweeney, writing about the merchants of the Connecticut River Valley, notes that they engaged in small group entertainments made up of related members of the local elite (Sweeney 1984: 246). Goodwin states that even for urban merchants, tea drinking was "allegiance building at its most intimate, while the celebrative use of alcohol and special feasts were for a larger audience," (Goodwin 1999: 131), an audience that the Tyngs may not have been able to assemble in Dunstable.

An ongoing search for comparative sites with deposits from the 3rd quarter of the 18th century from this region of Massachusetts has turned up few examples as yet. Particularly lacking are sites of ordinary or poor farmers. One site that has provided some interesting points for comparison is the 20M site in Harvard, Massachusetts, inhabited by the Farwell family (Fragola and Cherau 2001). The deposits come from the area of the dwelling house of John Farwell, land that he purchased in 1754 and 1760. The family occupied the site until the early-19th century, so there is a longer temporal range represented by the ceramics, and the Mean Ceramic Dates are 1777 and 1794 for two different sections of the house (Fragola and Cherau 2001: 107). In some ways the Farwells are comparable to the residents of the Tyng site; they were farmers, lived on a tributary of the Merrimack River, and constructed a two-story addition to their house before 1782. Comparison of the 1771 tax data shows that John Farwell was not farming on as large a scale as Eleazer Tyng (150 bushels of grain, compared to 200), and did not have

such valuable real estate, but he could still be considered a well-off farmer in his town (Pruitt 1978). Excavation did not determine the floor plan or exact dimensions of the Farwell's new house, but documentary evidence describes it as two-stories tall (Fragola and Chereau 2001: 128), like the Tyng Mansion, an attribute that was shared by only a small percentage of the houses at the end of the 18th century. Interestingly, the 20M site also yielded similarly few ceramic plates. Only 5 of the 163 vesselized sherds were from plates, the rest were from bowls, cups, mugs, and chamber pots (Fragola and Chereau 2001: 105). The report text mentions a stoneware teapot, although it is not listed in the minimum vessel list. It is also not possible to determine from the report how many of the identified cups and bowls were forms associated with tea drinking. Some tea drinking may have occurred, but like the Tyngs, the Farwells did not invest in ceramic tableware or other items for formal dining. This is in great contrast to people closer to urban or coastal areas, such as the merchant Offin Boardman, whose privy at the Spencer-Peirce-Little house site in Newbury, Massachusetts yielded large numbers of dishes for feeding and entertaining people from a pre-1811 deposit. Additionally, documents attest to the Boardmans entertaining up to 80 people at once (Beaudry n.d.: 32–35). Although Newbury was a semi-rural area, it was closely associated with Newburyport, a busy port town in the 18th century. Preliminary comparisons between these two inland sites and the coastal Spencer-Peirce-Little site suggest very different social activities and circles.

Conclusion

This research is preliminary since it considers only certain aspects of one of three excavations that have taken place on the Tyng site. Continued research will integrate all of the excavated material and examine it in more detail, as well as integrate more contemporary documentary evidence and comparative

archaeological sites. It is my hope that this paper has raised some questions and suggested some areas to pursue in studying the rural elite of the 18th century. Although only a small segment of a town's population, the rural elite may have led lives that were quite different from those of their townsmen. More comparative research will be necessary to explore the material manifestations of this difference. The Tyngs, and other wealthy rural families, would also have had a very different daily experience than the urban merchants and shopkeepers who were their economic equals, because of their somewhat isolated location and economic involvement in agricultural activities. Their position raises interesting questions about their social identities—how did the rural elite see themselves in relationship to the urban merchants, and what kinds of social interactions did they have? More research is necessary, but this study has suggested some preliminary conclusions. Eleazer's central-hall Georgian mansion house was an imposing, highly visible attempt to make a connection with the coastal elite by using a contemporary, urban floor plan and architectural style. The glassware and ceramics that were used in the house were chosen more selectively to suit his social needs. The overall archaeological assemblage shows a mixture of refined wares that would be used by small groups for mannerly social occasions and the coarse earthenwares such as milkpans, jugs, bowls, and platters that would have been used in the daily life and work on the large farm.

Documentary, architectural, and archaeological sources show that although the Tyngs of Dunstable could not compete in actual wealth with the coastal merchants, they did try to associate themselves with them, especially with the elite in Boston. They did this through social mechanisms such as marriage and education, as well as in materially visible ways through the house that Eleazer built to the ceramics that he used. The association was selective, however, and suited to the rural setting and smaller social circle. The utilitarian ceramics necessary for daily farm activities,

the foundation of Eleazer's wealth, are well represented in the archaeological record. This combination of activities is consistent with the Tyngs' position as an old family that had retired from the center of merchant activity to pursue life as members of the landed elite in rural Massachusetts. In their new community they took on the role of "culture brokers," (De Cunzo 1995) connecting the town with the larger world by importing goods, bringing in knowledge of recent styles, and representing the town in the colony's military and political systems. They used material culture to maintain an association with their former social and commercial circles. This retirement from urban trade to a position based on land may not have been seen as a backwards step, out of a position of prestige, but as an advancement, a statement of the family's early success and ability to situate themselves as a "landed" family.

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