

A Place Forgotten: Lower Howard's Creek, Kentucky as an example of changing industrial and consumer landscapes, the John and Rachel Martin House (Site 15Ck478)

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Abstract

Twenty-one students from Transylvania University took part in a four-week field school in May, 2002 in cooperation with Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. to perform preliminary excavation at the John and Rachel Martin House (15Ck478) situated along Lower Howard's Creek in Clark County, Kentucky. Phase I and Phase II testing were undertaken. Ceramic sherds recovered from the site will be analyzed to argue that the cultural landscape we view today is drastically different from that of the 18th and 19th centuries. During this period Lower Howard's Creek served as an early industrial center in Kentucky that was well connected to larger national and global economies. An analysis of the ceramics recovered from the site helps support this argument.

Introduction

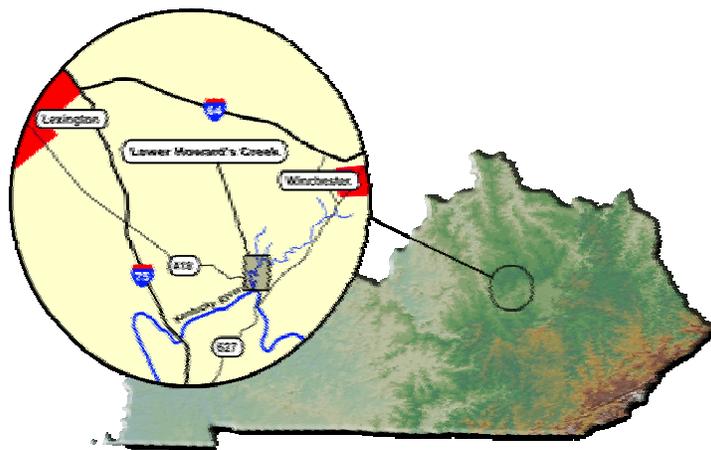


Figure 1-Location of Lower Howard's Creek

When viewing any landscape in a contemporary setting, it is important to interpret a site in its proper historical context. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the Lower Howard's Creek Valley of Clark County, Kentucky. (See **Figure 1**) Today the valley appears as nothing more than a well-forested, remote location set in a nature preserve. However, to underestimate the cultural

relevance of this area is simply a mistake. The valley once served as an important industrial corridor dependent upon the swift flow of the creek to power its mills as well as for transportation as part of the larger Kentucky River watershed.



Figure 2-River traffic along the Kentucky River.

Early in the state's history, the Kentucky River became an important transportation route. (See **Figure 2**) By 1787 the potential of the river was realized following the first trip of a flotilla of flatboats down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans. The steamboat first made its appearance on the river in 1816. Lower Howard's Creek, with a watershed of 10,302 acres forms an important tributary of the Kentucky River. (Kleber 1992: 510)

Set along Lower Howard's Creek in the late eighteenth and throughout most of the nineteenth centuries were three water-powered grist mills; a whiskey distillery; tanneries; a boat yard to construct flatboats for river traffic; a large limestone quarry; several tobacco inspection warehouses, and other early industrial sites. The variety of sites related to industry and commerce is a testament to the thriving economy of the creek valley prior to the advent of improved roads and turnpikes as well as the railroad to offer an alternate means of transportation. Also, the introduction of the steam engine and other sources of power made creeks unnecessary for the production of goods. These changes caused industry to move away from locations such as Lower Howard's Creek. By the 1870's, many of the mills in the valley had ceased operation. (Clay 1997; Mauck 1997; Smith n.d.)

The remains of several residential sites are also present in the valley. One such site is the John and Rachel Martin House (15Ck478), which is the most well-preserved. (See **Figure 3**) In this paper, I analyze the data recovered from



Figure 3-The John and Rachel Martin House, ca. 1940.

this site with specific emphasis on ceramics to argue that although secluded and isolated by today's standards, the valley was at one time connected to a larger national and global economy through its position along the Kentucky River. The results presented here should be considered preliminary since research at the Martin House and within the creek valley is ongoing.

Methodology



Figure 4-Transylvania University Field School Students at work.

In May of 2002, 21 students in a four-week field school offered through Transylvania University in cooperation with Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. conducted Phase I and Phase II testing at the site. (See **Figure 4**) The main goal of this field school was the recovery of data that may be endangered by preservation

and stabilization efforts on the house. This testing included the placement of 73 shovel

tests on a five-meter grid. Using the results of this systematic shovel testing, 13 1 x 1 m test units excavated in 10 cm arbitrary levels were placed in areas of high artifact density. Termination of the units occurred upon reaching culturally sterile subsoil. Artifacts were recovered using ¼" dry screening. Limited remote sensing was also performed using a Fluxgate Gradiometer with little success due to tin roofing materials scattered across the site.

A variety of techniques were used to date the deposits recovered. One of the primary dating techniques employed was mean ceramic dating based on Stanley South's formula (South 1977). The second technique was window glass dating using Moir's regression formula. Each fragment of window glass recovered was measured for thickness and then entered into Moir's formula to provide an associated date of manufacture for each fragment. (Moir 1987). Finally, temporally sensitive artifacts such as wire versus cut nails were given an accepted minimum and maximum date. It is important to remember that several other factors exist resulting in the creation of approximate rather than exact dates. The dates from these different methods, in sum, were used to calculate the mean minimum and maximum date for each level, which was used to provide stratigraphic dating by level for the entire site.

For the purposes of this analysis, four units - Units 3, 4, 5, and 6 – were taken as a sample. The units were located north of the structure near the periphery of the site, adjacent to the historic stone fence that surrounds the house. (See **Figure 5**)

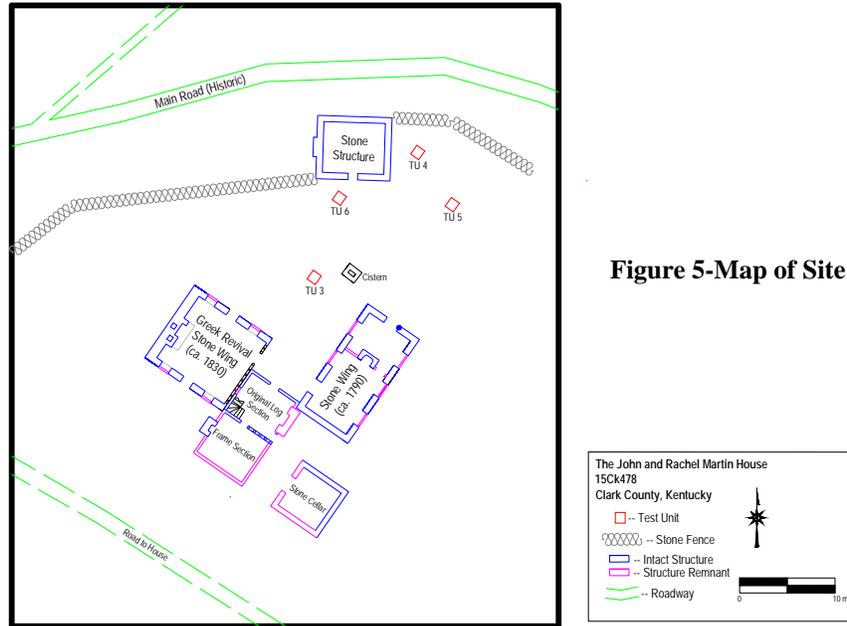


Figure 5-Map of Site 15Ck478.

Theoretical Framework

The deposits adjacent to the house were relatively shallow while those to the north side of the structure near the periphery of the site were much deeper, extending to an average depth of 80 cm below ground surface. The artifact concentration was also much higher in this area. Several theories have developed to explain this phenomenon on the site.

To the north of the Martin house is the main activity area where most of the domestic activities would have taken place. On the other hand, the south yard, contained few activity areas and can properly be labeled the public façade for the home. This is even more evident when viewing the large stone wing added to the house in the 1830's with its decorative Greek revival elements that dominate this side of the house. (Mauck 1997: 22) As a result, the formal front yard was less intensively utilized than the rear yard where the four selected units are located.



The 'cult of domesticity' is the name given by historians to the teaching of general values to children to replace the seemingly outmoded general skills their parents possessed. Historian, Stephanie Coontz states that the most important of these values was the idea of gentility. This value and its presence in early nineteenth century homes caused a clear delineation between public and private spaces. (Coontz 1988: 192; Fitts 1999: 39) The John and Rachel Martin house offers an excellent example of this separation of public and private space at the home of an upper-middle class family.

Also, site structure must be taken into account in sampling these four units. Archaeologists have long understood that artifacts are not distributed equally across a site nor are they of a consistent size. Stanley South (1979: 218) has shown that smaller objects tend to be discarded more adjacent to the house while larger objects are discarded in areas other than the yard such as in a gully, pit, abandoned well, or privy hole. (South 1979: 218) Furthermore, the 'toss zone' which is more adjacent to the living area, usually results in smaller sized artifacts while the 'drop zone' often contains larger artifacts (Binford 1978: 349).

Another factor must also be taken into account when examining site structure and artifact size. Yard sweeping is a practice that was present throughout the southeastern United States and continues in some areas to this day. (Smith 2002: 54-55) The low artifact density in the immediate yard area is a strong indicator that yard sweeping was a practice at this site. Because the units selected lie at the periphery of the site it is very likely that they were within the toss zone and do not represent areas of dumping or secondarily deposited material. (Binford 1978; Martin 2002; Metcalf and Heath 1990; O'Connell 1987; Simms 1988) Also, because the artifact density appears to be relatively low for almost 200 years of occupation, the largest areas of artifact concentration may in fact lie further to the north of the house beyond the stone wall.

The selected units represent those with the highest artifact density and the deepest deposits of the 13 units excavated on the site. It is important to also note that the ceramic sherds recovered were relatively small, generally less than 5 cm in width, disallowing any determination of vessel function.

Site Occupation

John and Rachel Martin emigrated to Kentucky from Virginia with their family at some point between 1784 and 1786 and acquired

Table of Occupation

Occupants	Dates of Occupation	Status
John and Rachel Martin	1784 to 1821	Wealthy Farmer and Industrial Developer
Valentine and Hannah Martin	1821 to mid-1850's	Wealthy Farmer and Industrial Developer
W.T. Bush	mid-1850's to 1867	Mill Operator
A.S. Hampton and heirs	1867 to 1940's	Mill

100 acres of land in the sweeping bend of Lower Howard's Creek. Shortly after the purchase of this land, Martin built the central log portion of the house as well as the neighboring stone grist mill. (See **Figure 6**) Within 10 years, Martin also constructed the larger stone wing on the west side of the house. Martin also owned 390 acres of land in Fluvanna County, Virginia. Tax records show that Martin owned anywhere from 1 to 4 slaves during his residency along Lower Howard's Creek. (Mauck 1997: 8-9)

Sometime in the 1790's, the Martin grist mill passed out of John Martin's hands and was sold to John Holder. Martin was a fairly affluent farmer and industrial developer in the valley. In 1806 John Martin sold his property and house to his second son Valentine. However, the elder Martin continued to live at the site until his death in 1821. Valentine Martin building upon his father's assets continued to acquire property as well as increase his slaveholding to a maximum of 12 slaves in 1831. In the 1830's, Valentine constructed the large stone wing with its many Greek Revival elements on the east side of the house. Following 1831, Valentine Martin's wealth began to decrease. At some point in the 1850's, Valentine Martin moved away from the site to an adjoining county shortly before his death in 1859. (Mauck 1997: 13, 22)



Figure 6-Martin Grist Mill, ca. 1900.

Following, or shortly before Valentine Martin's death the Martin farm was sold to W.T. Bush who not only operated the mill but also lived in the house. Along with running the Martin Mill, Bush constructed a cooper's shop and distillery on the property. According to the 1860 census Bush had \$4,200 in real estate and a personal estate of \$7,200. In 1867, A.S. Hampton purchased the property and his heirs continued to operate the mill on into the twentieth century and reside in the house until the 1940's. In sum, the house experienced four distinct periods of occupation with perhaps more sporadic occupation into the twentieth century. (Mauck 1997: 19, 21) Following, the 1940's the house and mill were abandoned and have quickly deteriorated.

Results

So what does the ceramic assemblage at the Martin house site tell us about the early economic ties this community had with larger global economic systems?

A total of 383 ceramic sherds, approximately 21% of the artifact assemblage, were recovered from the four units selected. These ceramic sherds represent a variety of ware types including both unrefined and refined

earthenwares such as redware, stoneware, yellowware, creamware, pearlware, ironstone, whiteware, and porcelain. A distinction is made between unrefined and refined earthenwares not only because of differing technologies but also because the former represents localized production while the latter signifies production in larger centers with wider distribution networks.

By examining the ware types a reconstructed image of Lower Howard's Creek and its early accessibility to consumer goods should be possible. (See **Table 1**) Redware was popular from about 1730 up until 1840 and during that time served mainly as food and liquid storage vessels. (Fay 1986; Ramsay 1947: 128) Because of the health effects of the lead based glaze used on redware, stoneware became more popular

Ware Type	N= (383 sherds total)	% of Assemblage
Creamware	15	3.92%
Pearlware	51	13.32%
Whiteware	210	54.83%
Ironstone	23	6.01%
Redware	26	6.79%
Stoneware	30	7.83%
Yellowware	3	0.78%
Porcelain	20	5.22%
Unidentified	2	0.52%

Table 1-Ceramic Assemblage from 15Ck478.

by the end of the 18th century and continued to grow in popularity throughout the early nineteenth century thus becoming the 'workhorse' of nineteenth century domestic life. Stoneware is made of slightly more refined materials than redware and requires much higher temperatures for firing as well as longer firing time. (Day and Clay 2002: 10-14; Moore and Rotman 2002: 3) Redwares and Stonewares were produced more locally and distributed through smaller trade networks because they required less technical expertise to produce and tended to be larger, more fragile vessels. 'Pot sellers' traveled around selling their stoneware and redware goods. Furthermore, imperfect pieces known as seconds could be purchased directly from the potter for a discounted price. (Ketchum 1970; Raycraft and Raycraft 1987; Walthall et al. 1991) Several potteries are known to have existed in the area during the early part of the nineteenth century. At least nine potteries operated within 15 miles of the Martin site and many more were located within 50 miles. (Hackley 1997; Kentucky Pottery 1997) During the latter part of the nineteenth century more distant potteries with wider, more

established trade networks began to put many of these smaller potteries out of business. (Raycraft and Raycraft 1987)

Because of the availability of redware and stoneware in the immediate vicinity of the Martin farmstead one would expect that these would be well represented in the ceramic assemblage. This is not the case. (See **Table 2**) During John Martin's occupation of the site, approximately 13% of the assemblage is made up of stoneware and redware combined. Later during Valentine Martin's occupation this number increases slightly to 17%. The Bush occupation shows a marked decrease to 11%. As for the occupation by A.S. Hampton and heirs, 14% of the assemblage for this occupation were redware or stoneware sherds. When taking into account that the Hampton family occupied the site for close to 100 years this number shows that by the end of the nineteenth century the reliance on redware and stoneware as utilitarian vessels had virtually ended. These numbers mean little until one looks at the availability of refined earthenwares at the site and their representation in the artifact assemblage.

Occupants	Occupation Range	% Redware	% Stoneware	% Yellowware
John and Rachel Martin	1784 to 1821	11.76%	0.84%	1.68%
Valentine and Hannah Martin	1821 to mid-1850's	9.29%	6.79%	1.07%
W.T. Bush	mid-1850's to 1867	0.53%	10.70%	1.07%
A.S. Hampton and heirs	1867 to 1940's	2%	12%	2%

Table 2-Unrefined earthenware assemblage from 15Ck478.

Refined earthenwares include creamware, pearlware, ironstone, whiteware, and porcelain. At the Martin site, during John Martin's occupation pearlware is by far the most numerous ware type in the assemblage comprising 24% of the ceramics recovered. Other early ware types are also present in smaller numbers. During the later occupation by Valentine Martin, whiteware is by far the most dominant ware type making up 53% of the assemblage followed by 17% Pearlware. During the Bush and Hampton occupation periods Whiteware continues to be the dominant ware type on the site at 70 and 66% respectively. The presence of these refined earthenwares on the site is a clear indication of connections to larger economic systems. (See **Table 3**)

One of the most striking findings is the amount of porcelain present during the early occupation of the site. The production of porcelain was not mastered in Europe until 1708 and in America until 1826. The number of porcelain factories in

Occupants	Occupation Range	% C-ware	% P-ware	% W-ware	% I-stone	% Porcelain	% Unid.
John and Rachel Martin	1784 to 1821	8.4%	23.5%	40.34%	3.36%	10.1%	0
Valentine and Hannah Martin	1821 to mid-1850's	3.21%	16.8%	52.5%	3.93%	5.36%	1.07%
W.T. Bush	mid-1850's to 1867	1.60%	2.67%	70.05%	9.09%	4.28%	0
A.S. Hampton and heirs	1867 to 1940's	0	0	66%	10%	4%	4%

Table 3-Refined earthenwares recovered from 15Ck478.

the United States remained small throughout the 19th century. Porcelain is considered the most common tableware among more affluent families in the 18th and 19th centuries. (Boger 1971: 266; Fay 1986: 69; Mankowitz and Hagger 1957: 27) During John Martin's occupation 10% of the assemblage was made up of porcelain and during Valentine Martin's occupation just over 5% of the recovered ceramic sherds were porcelain. Clearly, through the presence of refined white earthenwares, namely pearlware and porcelain, the Martin's and later occupants of the site were connected to larger economic systems and in some cases global economic systems.

How does the ceramic assemblage at the Martin site compare with another site in the region located along a land transportation route rather than the river? The William McConnell homestead (See Figure 7) was located along the road that led from Maysville to Lexington, Kentucky. This road was first used for wagon travel in the 1780's and by 1817 was so heavily traveled that improvements were needed. In this year the Maysville and Lexington Turnpike Company was incorporated and the road saw many improvements allowing for better transportation and commerce between Maysville, Kentucky, located along the Ohio River and landlocked Lexington, Kentucky. (Coleman 1995: 232-233; Day and Clay 2002: 5-6; Friend 1996: 11; Kleber 1992: 622) The road is still used today and forms part of U.S.



Figure 7-Excavation at the McConnell homestead.

Highway 27/68.

William McConnell constructed his home along the Lexington-Maysville Road at some point in the 1780's and occupied the site until his death in 1823 making him contemporaneous with John Martin. (Day and Clay 2002: 5-16 – 5-18) When viewing the ceramic assemblage from the McConnell homestead the percentage of redware and stoneware is much higher than early refined white earthenwares such as creamware and pearlware. 41% of the sample from McConnell's homestead is made up of redware while 14% is stoneware. In comparison, the ceramic assemblage from the Martin house site contains far less redware and stoneware. (See **Table 4**) As such, the McConnell's were relying on local producers for redware and stoneware rather than more distant producers of refined earthenware.

	% Redware	% Stoneware	% Yellowware	% Creamware	% Pearlware
John and Rachel Martin	6.79%	7.83%	0.78%	3.92%	13.32%
William McConnell	41.4%	13.98%	0	15.5%	29.03%

Table 4-Comparison of ceramic assemblage from the John and Rachel Martin house and the McConnell homestead.

Conclusion

What do these numbers tell us? Mainly, that Lower Howard's Creek rather than being tied to local distribution networks was instead connected to larger economic systems and not only a national economy but when looking at the Porcelain present perhaps a global economy. The Kentucky River and its confluence with the Ohio River allowed the transport of goods from larger centers of ceramic production to the now isolated Lower Howard's Creek Valley. It was not until the mid nineteenth-century that many areas of Kentucky with the introduction of improved roads and turnpikes would experience the same luxuries provided by the River which represents the earliest form of transportation in the area. When comparing the Martin House site with the McConnell homestead, located along an early roadway it appears that the river formed a better connection with outside markets than did the road in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was not until the introduction of better roads that these corridors reversed and land transportation began to offer a more efficient means of transportation.

Avenues for Future Research

Rather than being the final word this paper simply asks important questions to guide future research along Lower Howard's Creek and other early settlements located along the Kentucky River. Furthermore, future research might attempt a comparison of inland sites and the goods available at these sites before the advent of improved roads. This site through future research holds the key to answering many of these questions.

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