

Beyond the Mean Ceramic Date: The Interpretive Potential of Historic Ceramics in Cultural Resource Management

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While the mean ceramic date (MCD) is a useful, and often central, application of our ceramic data from historic sites, it does not represent the limit of the ceramic assemblage's interpretive potential. Cultural resource managers are often limited to the MCD because of the constraints placed upon our time (deadlines, backlogs, and planning) and budgets. This paper will suggest that mitigation archaeologists can implement a few tested, effective, and relatively simple analytical tools to amplify the impact of their research and to make an explicit connection between CRM and anthropological archaeology. Specifically, we can attempt to discern and compare social position through an evaluation of the quantity, quality, and variety of ceramic assemblages. Additionally, it is suggested that the often time-consuming process of arriving at a minimum vessel count may be unnecessary as sherd count delivers much of the same information.

Making It Meaningful

Responsible cultural resource management (CRM) is a challenging enterprise. Our commitments are numerous and diverse: not only must we deliver a product to our client, but we must also uphold Ministry standards, operate within budget, contribute to a viable commercial venture, deliver quality research, and present that research in a timely and concise manner, all while keeping an eye to both past and future contracts. With all these responsibilities, it is perhaps understandable that many of our sites are not subjected to a more intense research. Particularistic information is paramount—how many, what kind, where was it found?—while in-depth interpretation of the assemblage is limited. This in-depth analysis, which places the “how many, what kind” information into real social context, is exactly the type of information that would make our work more relevant to the broader discipline of anthropological archaeology. Certainly the issue is not the lack of serious, research-minded archaeologists working in the private sector, but rather it is an issue of the time constraints placed upon those of us who, faced with dozens of backlogged site reports, must temper the analytical with the practical.

Are we, then, limited to reproducing the same particularistic reports for each site that we study?

Are in-depth analyses and sensitive interpretations to be confined to conference papers and journal articles? As funding to university-based archaeological research is drastically reduced, the responsibility to accurately document Ontario's past falls to mitigation firms. We *can* increase the interpretive impact of our site reports, without adversely affecting our schedules, through the application of several simple analytical approaches common in historical archaeology. As a review of the literature demonstrates, historical ceramic assemblages are excellent data sets with which to evaluate a central anthropological topic: social (or socioeconomic) position.

Irish Tenants, Canadian Tenants

This interest in evaluating social position did not begin with my recent involvement in cultural resource management, but rather with doctoral research on sites in County Roscommon, Republic of Ireland. From 1997 to 2003, researchers with the Centre for the Study of Rural Ireland, under the direction of Dr. Charles Orser, excavated three rural house sites near Strokestown. One site was located within the former village of Mulliviltrin, Bellanmullia townland, and the other two were located within the

townland of Ballykilcline (Figure 1). These sites were occupied by members of the broad social category of tenants and labourers in the decades immediately preceding the Great Famine (*An Gorta Mor* in Irish) of 1845–1852. Far from being a “monolithic ‘peasant’ framework” (Whelan 2000:187), distinct levels in rural Irish society (Figure 2) were based on culturally defined criteria that “underlay people’s experiences, forming the bedrock of their common sense, their individual consciousness, and their personal and collective perceptions” (Silverman 2001:7).

The sites in County Roscommon provided a small cross-section of these pre-Famine social levels, ranging from the lowest (landless labourers) to the middle range (the two occupations of the Nary family at Ballykilcline). The excavation of the small site at Mulliviltrin village likely represented the remains of a mud- or sod-walled, thatch-roofed cabin occupied by undocumented itinerant labourer(s) who rented a small patch of ground on a year-to-year basis to meet their subsistence needs, rather than for profit. Mulliviltrin, and other villages like it, were largely undocumented due to the governmental practice of failing to enumerate dwellings it felt were “liable to rapid changes” (Weld 1832:607-608). It is unclear how

many individuals occupied the site, nor do we know the duration of that occupation, although it is clear that the cessation of occupation was 1847 (Brown 1848); Mulliviltrin village was one of many subjected to the mass evictions ordered by Strokestown-based landlord Denis Mahon during the height of the Great Famine. Excavation of the site revealed a simple, flat-stone hearth, consisting of deeply charred and fragmentary stones directly over a thin layer of sand, an area of burned thatch, and a posthole. A total of 66 artifacts was recovered during the six-week excavation, including refined white earthenware and coarse red earthenware fragments, bottle glass, a single wrought nail, a brass button, and miscellaneous other items (Hull 2004).

The two stone house sites in Ballykilcline townland were associated with the Nary family—Mark Nary and his sons Luke, James, and Edward. Edward was listed separately in the rent books and, therefore, likely occupied one of the houses with his family. Together the family held roughly 30 acres of land. The size of the holding and the fact that the names of the family were actually recorded in the official lease books suggested that the Narys belonged to the middling farmer agri-social class. However, the Nary family fared no

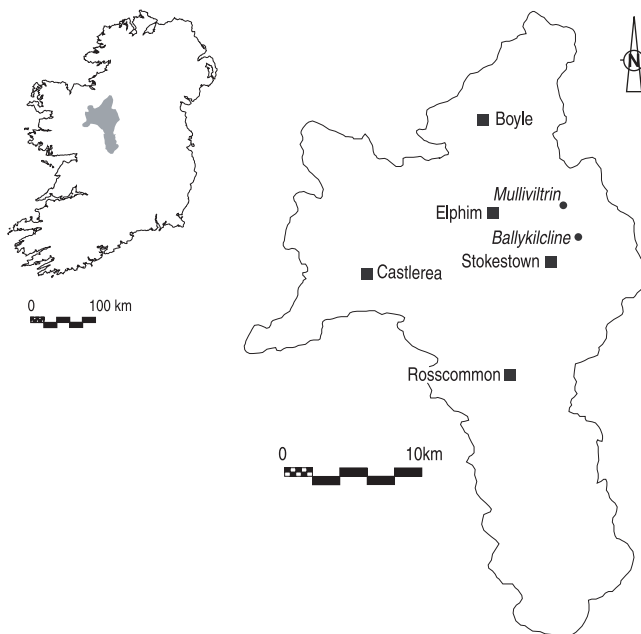


Figure 1. Location of Ballykilcline and Mulliviltrin within County Roscommon, with an inset map of the Republic of Ireland and the location of County Roscommon.

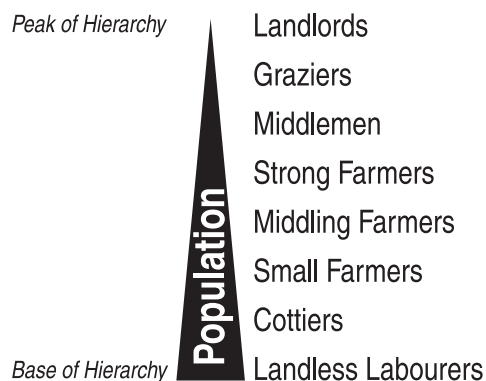


Figure 2. *Simplified and generalized nineteenth-century Irish rural social-agricultural hierarchy.*

better than the family at Mulliviltrin during the Great Famine; the family was evicted and the houses destroyed by agents of the landlord—who, at this time, was Queen Victoria—during the winter of 1847–1848. The excavation of the Nary sites resulted in the identification of the tumbled remains of two stone-walled, slate-roofed structures (annotated the “north” and “south” cabins) and the collection of 9,099 artifacts, including coarse and refined earthenware, white ball clay smoking pipe fragments, flat glass, table utensils, shoe cleats, and beads (Hull 2004).

While the artifacts recovered from the house site in Mulliviltrin and the Nary cabins provided invaluable information on two largely undocumented segments of pre-Famine society, the interest in the analysis was far beyond its role as a “handmaiden to history” (Noël Hume 1964). The main focus of the analysis was to evaluate if, in the Irish sample, the artifacts offered clues to the agri-social position their former owners once held. While items from the architectural, personal, and faunal categories were recovered, ceramic items from the kitchen-food class offered the greatest interpretive potential. This research used many of the methods developed in North American historical archaeology to evaluate the material correlates of social status within this Irish context. Specifically, did these Irish tenants express their social position (consciously or subconsciously) through their ceramic purchases? The results from this analysis will be used as examples in this paper.

The insights gained from the work on Irish tenants are relevant to the study of Ontario tenancy in two ways. Firstly, once stripped of most of their historical shell, the Irish sites are merely a single type of site (rural agricultural) with a typical nineteenth-century artifact assemblage (Staffordshire ceramics, smoking pipes, buttons) to which I have streamlined and applied “middle range” methodologies to move from artifacts to aspects of the social system. These methodologies can be, and have been, applied to many different historical contexts in North America (for example, see Spencer-Wood 1984) and can certainly be implemented, to some degree, in our current CRM-based research.

Secondly, the research is relevant because of the direct historical connection between Ireland and Ontario. As Donald Akenson (1984:9) writes, “the Irish in Upper Canada...were much more important to Canadian society than the American Irish were to that of the United States. For most of the nineteenth century the Irish were the single largest European group in Upper Canada.” Irish immigrants, both before and during the Famine years, largely were not landless labourers (who couldn’t afford passage) but rather small tenant farmers who were neither affluent nor poverty stricken. These immigrants, largely tradesmen and farmers, often settled in the rural countryside, continuing the way of life they knew in their home country while exploring the new possibilities and challenges Ontario offered (Akenson 1984; MacKay 1990; Wilson 1994).

Ceramics and Social Position

The analysis of ceramic assemblages from archaeological sites has been a common way for historical archaeologists to evaluate class and social position. As Mark Groover (2002:107) notes, “the underlying premise concerning status and ceramics is that affluent households expressed status through consumer goods, such as expensive table services.” In this way, ceramic assemblages from different sites, or different site areas, could be compared based upon the quantity, quality, or variety of the collection. This assumption is not

without its problems, which have been addressed many times in the literature by archaeologists such as Charles Orser (2004) and Paul Mullins (1999b). In fact, the very concepts of socioeconomic status, class, and social position are contentious (Burke 1999; Cook et al. 1996; Spencer-Wood and Heberling 1987), but a discussion of the debate is beyond the scope of this paper. It would be helpful, however, to be very explicit about the operating definition of status/class/social position used in analysis. In this specific case, interest centred primarily on evaluating social position in the Irish rural agricultural hierarchy, which was largely based on access to land, type of lease agreement, and agricultural output, but also varied through time and geographic region (Hull 2004).

The most basic method of arriving at relative social position from archaeological collections is the evaluation of the quantity of fine earthenware within the assemblage. For example, Stephen Shephard (1987) in his study of antebellum Alexandria demonstrated that lower-ranked households have fewer ceramic vessels than those assemblages from higher-ranked households (see also Deetz 1972). Further, Shephard (1987:177) found a positive correlation between number of vessels and status when examining total ceramics, refined wares only, and coarse earthenware only. This method was also the least often used in archaeological analysis, as researchers had largely abandoned this simple method for more complex analyses. An evaluation of status based solely on minimum number of vessels (MNV) can be problematic if the researcher does not consider additional variables such as number of occupants, occupation duration, extent of excavation,

method of excavation, and the method of identifying and counting vessels or their fragments that affect the number of vessels recovered during excavation.

When this approach was tested using the Irish tenant sample, it worked well, was easy and simple, and provided reasonable results (Table 1). Mulliviltrin exhibited the fewest fine and coarse earthenware vessels (nine total vessels) as well as the lowest vessel density (0.067 vessels per square metre of excavation). The cabin designated “Nary north” contained the most vessels (122) and the highest vessel density (0.85 per square metre). The ranking of the three houses based on both MNV and vessel density accurately reflected the relative social position of each occupation.

Analysis can also focus on *certain types* of vessels within an assemblage. For example, the comparative presence, absence, and frequency of expensive ceramics within archaeological assemblages has long been seen as an accurate method to view social position at various sites (Kenyon and Kenyon 1982; Lewis 1978; Otto 1977). This process has become especially seductive since the publication of George Miller’s (1980, 1991) economic index of fine earthenware, the ceramic cost index, or CC Index. Miller’s explicit ranking of ceramic types and forms available from the late 1700s to the early 1900s by cost relative to the cheapest available ceramic type (creamware) has offered archaeologists a way to rank ceramic vessels (on a ratio scale) recovered from deposits based upon contemporary cost (Andrews and Fenton 2001; Heberling 1987; McBride and McBride 1987; O’Brien and Majewski 1989; Spencer-Wood 1984; Spencer-Wood and Heberling 1987; Wall 1991, 2001).

Table 1. *Earthenware MNV and density.*

Site (lowest to highest rank)	Fine Earthenware		Coarse Earthenware		Total Earthenware	
	MNV	Density (per m ²)	MNV	Density (per m ²)	MNV	Density (per m ²)
Mulliviltrin	5	0.054	4	0.030	9	0.067
Nary south	51	0.50	8	0.078	59	0.58
Nary north	84	0.59	38	0.27	122	0.85

Note: Fine earthenware category includes table and tea services, and miscellaneous items of fine earthenware, excluding white clay smoking pipes.

In addition, it was one of a small number of approaches that allowed the comparison of value between items that serve the same function (LeeDecker 1991:32).

Upon careful review of the archaeological literature, it was concluded that a *strict* application of Miller's CC Index as a primary method of discerning status within material collections could not be applied to these samples. Although the social implications of the CC Index's use as a status indicator are somewhat problematic, the primary limiting factor to the application of this method is the basic quality of the archaeological assemblages themselves. In order to apply the CC Index, the sample needed to be divided into meaningful time units that did not exceed 20 years. Because deeply stratified remains, such as a privy, were not found and no clear "start" date for the occupations has been identified, it has been impossible to separate the assemblage into these time units (a problem common to many historic sites). In addition, calculating the CC Index can be rather time-consuming. As an alternative, several archaeologists have demonstrated that a general analysis based on the *relative* cost of fine earthenware (more or less expensive items) is useful when the assemblage does not conform to the CC Index's strict parameters. Paul Farnsworth (1996) applied this method in his analysis of archaeological materials recovered from Wade's Green Plantation and Promised Land Plantation in the Bahamas (see also Armstrong 1990; Kenyon and Kenyon 1982; Moore 1985; Orser 1988a; Otto 1984). Farnsworth evaluates the percentage of fine earthenware in each assemblage from four general cost groups, ranging from least to most expensive: undecorated; minimally decorated (edged, sponged, or factory-slipped); painted; and printed. For those of us in CRM,

this is a useful approach because we already collect data on ceramic decorative types. It would be quite easy for us to compare the densities of, for example, transferware among a series of sites. For reasons that remain unclear, the evaluation of transferware density did not seem to reflect the social-agricultural hierarchy in Ireland (Table 2). One should not, however, dismiss the potential interpretive possibilities of this approach.

In addition to the overall number of vessels and the frequency of expensive ceramic types, some archaeologists have hypothesized that economic or social status is reflected in the minimum number of ceramic vessel forms in an assemblage (Andrews and Fenton 2001; Drucker 1981; Otto 1977, 1984; Shackel 1993; South 1972). Archaeologists working in a wide variety of North American historical contexts have found a positive correlation between the percentage of flatware in tableware assemblages and economic rank (De Cunzo 1987:282; Moore 1985; Otto 1977:102) and, it would follow, a negative correlation between percentage of bowls and economic rank. The significance of the percentage of bowls is based on the dietary traditions of different socioeconomic classes. In his study of Cannon's Point Plantation, John Otto (1977) noted that slaves and overseers (those persons with relatively low economic rank) more frequently ate liquid-based foods such as stews and pottages, as evidenced through documentary and zooarchaeological data (see also Wilkie 2000). The service and consumption of these types of foods is most effective in bowl-shaped (or deep) vessels. In contrast, the planter (high economic rank) was served meats and vegetables, which could be served on flat vessels (Otto 1977:104). Otto's (1977) evaluation of social class at Cannon's Point Plantation was an important step

Table 2. *Density of ceramic decorative types (MNV), ranked by expense.*

Site (lowest to highest)	Least Expensive				Most Expensive	
	Plain	Edged	Sponged	Factory-slip	Painted	Printed
Mulliviltrin	1 (0.007)	0	0	2 (0.015)	1 (0.007)	1 (0.007)
Nary south	5 (0.049)	9 (0.088)	0	5 (0.049)	7 (0.069)	21 (0.21)
Nary north	0	19 (0.13)	7 (0.49)	7 (0.49)	34 (0.24)	17 (0.12)

Notes (1) ceramic decorative types are listed in order of expense, from left to right.
 (2) numbers reflecting MNV per m² are listed in parentheses.

in the development of this type of research (see also Orser 1988b). Otto analyzed the archaeological remains from the domestic sites of planters, overseers, and slaves at the plantation and concluded that “archaeological remains from the plantation sites generally reflect social status differences.” In the Irish example, only the density of flat vessels reflected the social hierarchy (Table 3), perhaps due to particularities of the pre-Famine Irish rural diet. In Ontario, a flat versus deep vessel analysis would be especially intriguing if a particular site’s assemblage was subject to faunal analysis (see Ferris and Kenyon 1983).

In addition to the evaluation of flat and deep vessel forms, one might also use the presence of matching decorative types to make statements about social position. Matched sets of ceramics, used primarily for display, were essential elements in the Victorian aesthetic (Praetzellis and Praetzellis 1992). Exhibiting identical decorative motifs and colours, the presence of matched pieces within an archaeological assemblage suggests that the pieces were gained through a single purchasing event. This is due to the variety of tableware that may have been available at any one time. Replacement of a certain pattern was often impossible, as dealer stock and manufacturer’s supply were highly variable (Kenyon 1992; Miller 1974). As George Miller (1974:204) writes, “those who purchased their pottery in anything less than sets could only match on gross terms.” Therefore, the presence of matched ceramic items within an assemblage reflects a purchase of more than one item at a single time. Because of the expense involved in purchasing more than a single item at a time, the ability to purchase in sets may reflect higher social position. Miller’s (1974)

study of the archaeological remains from the tenant farmer occupation of the Moses Tabb house in Maryland is an often-cited example of such an analysis (see also Andrews and Fenton 2001; Kenyon 1992; Miller and Hurry 1983; Mullins 1999a; Otto 1984; Wall 1994). By analyzing and comparing the ceramic types in his assemblage, based on decoration and ware type, Miller (1974:205) found that very few of the pieces recovered were matching, which reflected a replacement-purchase pattern rather than the purchase of sets. While further research is needed into the supply of Staffordshire ceramics in the Irish rural countryside, the presence of matching vessels did correspond to each site’s position in the social hierarchy (Table 4).

Other studies have indicated that the percentage of teaware (cups, saucers, creamers, sugar bowls, waste bowls, etc.) present in an assemblage is a reflection of economic status; the higher the percentage of teaware, the higher the social position of the past inhabitants of the site (Lewis 1985; Wall 1991). A brief review of the history of tea in America reveals the reasoning behind this correlation. Prior to 1750, tea consumption required the proper accoutrements, leisure time to consume the drink, and the economic wealth to afford the new import (Martin 1996; Wall 1991). As the price of tea decreased, allowing the middle classes to partake, the taking of tea became highly ritualized. The tea “ceremony” became a highly structured, rigid social endeavour that, after the 1840s, was primarily a women’s gathering (Wall 1991). In her 1991 study, Diana Wall discovered the tea ceremony was an arena in which wealth and status of a family were displayed, reinforced, and perhaps increased on the basis of the quality of the teawares and the adherence of the family to tea etiquette.

Table 3. Flat and deep fine earthenware vessel forms.

Site	Flat Vessel Forms			Deep Vessel Forms		
	MNV	% MNV	MNV/m ²	MNV	% MNV	MNV/m ²
Mulliviltrin	2	40.0%	0.015	3	60.0%	0.022
Nary south	20	47.6%	0.2	22	52.4%	0.216
Nary north	40	56.3%	0.28	31	43.7%	0.217

Notes (1) table includes only identifiable fine earthenware tableware.

(2) % MNV is the percentage of each minimum number of particular vessel form within the total assemblage (MNV) of flat and deep forms.

Table 4. *Matched items (MNV) in fine earthenware ceramic assemblage.*

Site (lowest to highest rank)	MNV	Density (per m ²)
Mulliviltrin	0	0.0
Nary south	6	0.059
Nary north	13	0.091

Although it is unclear whether this “tea ceremony” had penetrated rural Ireland, certainly tea was enjoyed by many in the countryside in the early nineteenth century. Interestingly, both the percentage and density of teaware from the sites corresponded to their social position (Table 5).

Minimum Vessels versus Sherd Count

While completing my doctoral research—research which was based upon minimum vessel counts—a “statistically inclined” Old World prehistorian, Professor Ted Banning, suggested that a vessel count may be unnecessary for my analysis. He claimed that sherd count may be as accurate as a minimum vessel count. As a historical archaeologist, I was skeptical. How can sherd counts mean anything important? People in the past used vessels, not sherds; therefore vessels are culturally meaningful units (Beaudry et al. 1983; Yentsch 1990). Furthermore, as Adams (1993:29) suggested, “sherd count has little scientific value, given the host of factors affecting breakage and post-depositional events” (see also Cusick 1995). Historical archaeologists seem to be in agreement; vessel counts are the preferred units of interpretation. Further, Lynn Sussman (2000:103) wrote that “for any serious research purposes, sherd counts cannot be used as substitutes for object counts.” Why, then, bother with sherds?

Beyond the world of North American historical archaeology, the minimum vessel count’s validity is being questioned. For example, Clive Orton (2000:51) wrote, “[Calculating MNV] is essentially a futile exercise because (a) it is of no use, and can be actually misleading, in the estimation of the characteristics of populations, such as their compositions; (b) it can be very difficult, if not impossible, to calculate, because of the problem of identifying non-joining sherds to vessels with certainty.” A review of the literature (primarily in the area of faunal analysis) suggested that sherd count or its equivalent, the number of identified specimens (NISP), has some advantages over MNV or its equivalent, the minimum number of individuals (MNI). The first, and most basic, advantage is that it is relatively easy to calculate because it is a simple counting of identifiable elements (Banning 2000:95). No further mathematical operations or estimations are required. Because the NISP carries the same information about relative abundance that is gained from the calculation of MNV, the calculation of MNV is an unnecessary step. More significantly NISP, unlike MNV, is unaffected by level of aggregation (Grayson 1984:49, 63). NISP is not without its challenges, however. Orton (2000:52) has shown that differential breakage between pottery types can handicap the NISP’s ability to estimate assemblage compositions. The limitations of the NISP (or sherd count) do not outweigh the advantages.

Samples from the three Irish sites discussed earlier were employed to compare minimum vessel count to sherd count. The first step was to determine if the minimum vessel counts were correlated to sherd counts. A scatterplot was created in which NISP and MNV were represented along the horizontal and vertical axes, respectively (Figure 3). The figure demonstrates that as the

Table 5. *Teaware: percentage of fine earthenware MNV and MNV per square metre.*

Site	Teacups		Saucers		Teapots		Waste bowls		Total	
	A %	B	A %	B	A %	B	A %	B	A %	B
Mulliviltrin	40	0.02	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	0.02
Nary south	27.5	0.14	11.8	0.06	2	0	0	0	41.2	0.21
Nary north	25	0.15	22.6	0.13	1.2	0	2.4	0.01	51.2	0.3

Notes: (A) refers to the percentage of each MNV within the total fine earthenware assemblage from each site

(B) refers to the MNV per square meter of excavation.

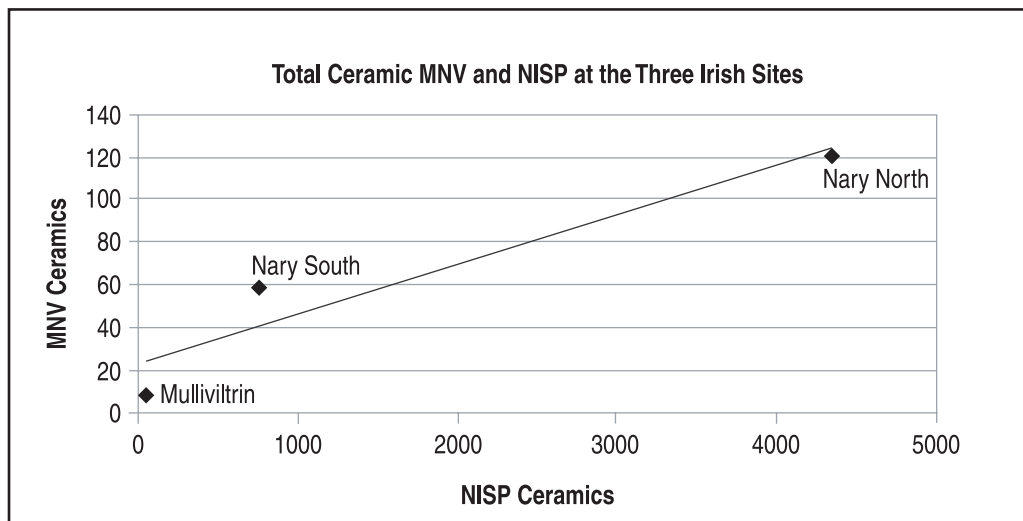


Figure 3. Scatterplot showing relationship between ceramic sherd counts and the minimum number of ceramic vessels.

number of sherds increases, so does the MNV. This suggested two things: (1) MNV counts are not as biased as one would assume and (2) the calculation of MNV is an unnecessary step because MNV and NISP are positively correlated (Grayson 1984:63). Analysis of NISP's effectiveness continued by evaluating the density of redware and flat vessels (by NISP) and sample size and sampling fraction. The review of the analysis of the density of redware (NISP per m^2) and density of flat fine earthenware vessels (NISP per m^2) based on sample size and sampling fraction revealed that the results are similar to the analysis based on minimum numbers. Because the focus of the research was not on absolute numbers but rather on the relative abundance of redware at each of the Irish sites, the investigation showed that NISP provides similar information to the MNV. This not only suggested that MNV is working in this study, but also that NISP alone may be adequate for future studies at this level.

It is likely that this limited study based on three archaeological sites will not convince North American historical archaeologists that sherd count does have interpretive power. Nor should it, as the study presented here lacks statistical eloquence and an adequate sample. It should, however, be viewed as a call to re-evaluate both minimum vessel count and sherd count, especially as

tools for cultural resource managers. It is suggested that for those of us in the real world of mitigation, we can say something meaningful about our assemblages based solely on sherd count, without the often time-intensive next step of estimating number of vessels.

The Interpretive Power of CRM

The purpose of this paper is to kick-start a discussion about the best and most responsible ways to deal with the data we collect each working day. It is imperative that, when possible and appropriate, we make an effort to move beyond the mean ceramic date and utilize the ceramic assemblage in a more insightful and powerful way. This is not to say that anything discussed within these pages is new to historical archaeologists in Ontario. The approaches outlined here have been prominent, well-documented steps in the development of historical archaeology since the 1970s. For the most part, however, applying these analytical methods to assemblages within the pages of site reports is limited, largely due to time and budget constraints. By streamlining the process and identifying those steps that are unnecessary, mitigation archaeologists will be able to provide some level of cultural analysis,

rather than just artifact analysis. The methods presented here are not complex—the evaluation and comparison of the quantity, quality, and variety of ceramic assemblages is quite basic. The complexity of these methods is further reduced by the suggestion that each can be satisfactorily performed with the sherd count data set alone. Although it has been repeated often enough to have become almost cliché, Willey and Phillips's (1958:2) quote “archaeology is anthropology or it is nothing” still serves as a guide for the field nearly 50 years later. Archaeology done within a mitigation context is no less archaeological than academic archaeology and, by extension, should not be any less anthropological. This is especially important as the focus of historical archaeology in Ontario shifts. As funding for archaeological projects within the academic sector becomes increasingly limited (especially for nineteenth-century sites) the sites excavated within the context of cultural resource management comprise an increasing percentage of the data set for historic Ontario. Increasingly, the onus falls on us to use the huge database we have collectively amassed to “explicate and explain” (Binford 1962:217) early Euro-Canadian histories and cultures in Ontario. In so doing, archaeological sites (homesteads, blacksmith shops, kilns, etc.) cease to exist in an interpretive vacuum. Rather, the site is placed within the context of surrounding archaeological sites, the community, and the region. In other words, we no longer see only a discrete site, but a site within a network of interaction. By attempting to reveal social status (however defined) through an examination of material culture, we demonstrate that mitigation archaeology *is* anthropological archaeology. We also highlight the important work being done in Ontario by insightful archaeologists who just happen to work in the private sector.

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La date moyenne de céramique (DMC) est un outil utile, et souvent central, dans l'analyse de la céramique provenant des sites historiques. Par contre, elle ne représente pas la limite du potentiel d'interprétation de ce type de collection. Les responsables de la gestion des ressources culturelles sont souvent limités à la DMC face aux contraintes placées sur leur temps (date limite, travail en retard, et planification) et leurs budgets. Cet article suggère que les archéologues d'atténuation peuvent implémenter quelques outils analytiques prouvés, efficaces et relativement simples afin d'amplifier l'impact de leur recherche et permettre la liaison explicite entre l'archéologie en gestion des ressources culturelles et l'archéologie anthropologique. Spécifiquement, nous pouvons essayer de discerner et comparer la position sociale par une évaluation de la quantité, la qualité, et la variété des assemblages de céramique. En plus, il est suggéré que le calcul du nombre de tessons de céramique pourrait aboutir à la même information que la méthode, souvent chronophage, d'arriver à un calcul du nombre minimum de récipients.
