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Structures of daily life : the material culture of Surry County, Virginia, 1690-1715

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Anna Louise Hawley for the
Master of Arts in History presented August 1, 1986.

Title: Structures of Daily Life: The Material Culture of
Surry County, Virginia, 1690-1715.

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

Thomas D. Morris, Chairman

Whitney K. Bates

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Charles A. LeGuin

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This is a study of the material culture of Surry County, Virginia for the years 1690 to 1715, based on an analysis of 221 probate inventories. The inventories were divided by decades and then ranked by total appraised value. The bottom 30%, lower middle 30%, upper middle 30% and the top 10% are described and changes over time examined. The picture of Surry that emerges is that of a poor county which

was, nevertheless, a place of opportunity for the poorer sections of society. The bottom 60% of Surry's residents profited from the brief boom in the tobacco market (1696-1702) and were, as a group, wealthier by the middle of the second decade of the eighteenth century than they had been in the 1690s. The top 40%, on the other hand lost ground economically.

STRUCTURES OF DAILY LIFE:
THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF SURRY COUNTY, VIRGINIA
1690-1715

by
Anna Louise Hawley

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
HISTORY

Portland State University
1986

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH:

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Chapter I

Introduction

The structures of daily life consist of people and things and ideas. Population size and density, technology and transport, and perhaps more importantly, the web of relationships between people and the values and assumptions of a society provide the framework of everyday life. Recent scholarship has explored widely these elements in the colonial Chesapeake, but less attention has been paid to the more mundane material culture of these people's lives. The historian Fernand Braudel has stated:

Through little details, travellers' notes, a society stands revealed. The ways people eat, dress, or lodge, at the different levels of that society, are never a matter of indifference. And these snapshots can also point out contrasts and disparities between one society and another which are not all superficial.¹

This is a study of the material culture of Surry County, Virginia for the period 1690 to 1715; it is a study of the pots and pans, the cows and hogs and horses, the chairs and candlesticks and chamber pots that the people of Surry used daily. It is based on the 221 probate inventories which the

¹ Fernand Braudel, Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century, vol. 1: The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible; vol. 2: The Wheels of Commerce; vol. 3: The Perspective of the World, trans. Sian Reynolds, (New York: Harper & Row, 1982, 1984), 1:29.

county clerk recorded during those years.

At the end of the seventeenth century Surry County was still, in many ways, a backcountry settlement. Lying along the south side of the James River, it stretched some twenty miles from Upper Chippokes Creek on the northwest to Lawnes Creek on the southeast. The area was planted early, the earliest mentioned settlement being in 1608. For the first half of the century the settlements on the Surry side of the James were part of James City County; Surry was separated from the parent county in 1652. For much of the seventeenth century most of the settlements were within fifteen miles of the James River. A few miles from the James was a slight upland crest beyond which the creeks and rivers flowed away from Virginia and the Chesapeake toward Albemarle Sound. One of these southeast flowing rivers, the Blackwater, was in the 1660s a boundary between colonists and Indians. In spite of the lack of convenient waterways and the closeness of the Indians, by 1690 much of the interior had been settled.²

The chief occupation of Surry's residents, like that of most everyone on the Tobacco Coast, was the planting, raising, processing and marketing of tobacco. They grew

² The material in this paragraph is drawn from Kevin P. Kelly, "'In dispers'd Country Plantations': Settlement Patterns in Seventeenth-Century Surry County, Virginia", The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society & Politics, Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman, eds. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979), pp.183-205.

low-grade oronocco tobacco, on some of the poorest tobacco land in the colony; "only the tobacco of the Eastern Shore and the counties south of the lower James brought a consistently lower price than Surry's".³

Following a depression lasting into the late 1680s, the tobacco industry in the Chesapeake during the years 1690-1715 was stagnant; production generally did not increase and prices remained relatively stable. There was a brief boom between 1696 and 1702. Large areas of new land were patented and it has been suggested that more unfree immigrants arrived in 1699 than in any other year in the seventeenth century. As a consequence, production rose and Chesapeake tobacco was found in markets all over Europe. The boom did not last, however. By 1703 prices had fallen and remained down until at least 1713, after which the economy began a slow recovery.⁴

During this period Surry County grew steadily. During the depression years prior to and after the 1696-1702 boom, the affluent areas of the Tidewater retrenched but Surry continued to attract new settlements because of the inexpensive land in its interior.⁵

Surry lacked the grand and wealthy planters found

³ Kelly, p.193.

⁴ Russell R. Menard, "The Tobacco Industry in the Chesapeake Colonies, 1617-1730: An Interpretation", Research in Economic History, 5 (1980): 113-14, 140-43.

⁵ Kelly, p.197.

elsewhere in the Tidewater, but a large proportion of the county's farmers owned their own land. The quitrent roll of 1704 showed 266 resident landowners; the tithable list of 1703 lists 422 households.⁶ That is, 63% of Surry's householders farmed their own land. For the 37% who were tenant farmers, rent may have ranged anywhere from 5% to 25% of the annual produce of one man. For those who rented a substantial piece of property and had help this may not have been too onerous a burden.⁷

Population estimates for Surry vary depending on whether county or colony records are used. In 1699 the population of Surry was around 2,000 (2,014 by the colony's records, 2,033 by the county's). The county tithable list showed 683 tithables in 361 households with an average of 1.9 tithable to a household. Fifty-seven percent were one-man households, that is with only one adult male. Only 4%

⁶ Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), p.221. A quitrent was a nominal tax of one shilling per fifty acres landowners owed the Crown annually. The earliest extant quitrent roll is from 1704. See "Virginia Quit Rent Rolls, 1704", The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 28:3 (July 1920): 207-18. The chief colony-wide tax was a poll tax based on a list of tithables compiled yearly by the each county's sheriff. Those exempt were white women and children of all races. The age at which a person was considered an adult for tax purposes varied, after 1705 it was sixteen. Morgan, pp.397-401.

⁷ Morgan, pp.222-23. Menard says that a single worker could produce as much as 1700 pounds of tobacco a year during this period. Menard, p.153. It seems likely that the rate for producing oronocco tobacco, which was lighter weight than the sweet scented variety, would be less.

were households with more than five tithables; only one percent, or three households, had 11-20. The largest household had seventeen tithables; in contrast the wealthiest man in the colony, Robert Carter of Lancaster County, had eighty-one. Just over 22% of all the tithables were black. There were 1,350 untithables, that is children and white women. The average household had between five and six people in it.⁸

Probate inventories reveal what these households were like as far as material possessions go. After the death of an adult who was independent (that is, not a married woman nor a servant or slave), the court appointed two or three men to appraise the estate of the deceased. They were to inventory all the personalty, the moveable property. They usually appraised it as well, though by law this was not required if the estate were debt free. This was done shortly after death, usually within a month, and the resultant inventory was submitted to the court by the executor/trix or court-appointed administrator/trix. This inventory and appraisal of the moveable property of the deceased was designed to protect not only the heirs but also creditors.

There are four major problems with probate inventories as source material for constructing a picture of the material culture of Virginian society. First, not everyone

⁸ Morgan, pp.412-13, 419-20.

was inventoried. Married women, children, servants and slaves were not inventoried. Neither were adult males who had nothing of value. Also, those who had no debts, or whose estates could easily satisfy their creditors, could avoid probate court.

Secondly, the inventories are skewed toward age and wealth. More old persons die than young ones and the longer individuals live the more things they are likely to accumulate.

Third, a person's net worth cannot be established solely with the inventories. Although the administrator of an estate was to submit to the court an account of debts due and receivable, land, houses and other buildings were not inventoried.

And finally, there is the problem of under-reporting. Everything considered salable was supposed to be noted. For example, garden produce in a farming community had little market value and thus was not inventoried. Legacies were sometimes not inventoried; sometimes they were inventoried but not appraised, the inventory specifying that the items were bequests. Some individuals' wills indicated certain things were not to be appraised. The custom in some areas was to recognize, unofficially, the widow's rights to a few things-- a bed and a pot, but there was no set policy. The presence of crops in the inventory was dependent on the time of year the inventory was taken. Sometimes those living in

the household concealed things and sometimes the appraisers simply overlooked things.

In spite of these defects, probate inventories can reveal much about the daily life of Virginians at the turn of the century, what sorts of things their homes were furnished with and what they chose to spend their money on. Gloria Main has pointed out that "household items reflect not only the standard of living of their owner but also the cultural assumptions that guided their purchase."⁹

All the inventories for Surry County for the years 1690 through 1715 were analyzed; this period was chosen because of the completeness of the records and the relative stability of the economy which would allow for comparisons across time.

All but seventeen of the inventories were appraised.

⁹ Gloria L. Main, "Probate Records as a Source for Early American History", William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., 32:1 (Jan 1975):92. For further discussion of the opportunities and pitfalls of probate inventories see also Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "Inventories and the Analysis of Wealth and Consumption Patterns in St. Mary's County, Maryland, 1658-1777", Historical Methods, 13:2 (Spring 1980): 81-104; Harold B. Gill, Jr. and George M. Curtis, III, "Virginia's Colonial Probate Policies and the Preconditions for Economic History", Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 87 (1979): 68-73; Alice Hanson Jones, Wealth of a Nation to Be: The American Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution, (New York; Columbia University Press, 1980); Gloria L. Main, "The Correction of Biases in Colonial American Probate Records", Historical Methods Newsletter, 8:1 (Dec 1974): 10-28; and Daniel Scott Smith, "Underregistration and Bias in Probate Records: An Analysis of Data from Eighteenth-Century Hingham, Massachusetts", William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., 32:1 (Jan 1975): 100-110.

Of those seventeen, almost all seem to have been middling to substantial householders. Five of them were slaveowners and one of them also had a servant. Otherwise, their inventories resemble those of the middle and upper ranges of the appraised estates.

Some of the 204 appraised inventories had values listed in pounds of tobacco, others in pounds, shillings and pence. Given the stability of prices and the shortness of the period and that no tobacco price index exists for Virginia, all sums priced in the money of account, in pounds of tobacco, were converted to sterling by a factor of 10 shillings per hundred pounds of tobacco.¹⁰ The inventories were then divided into the periods 1690-99, 1700-09, and 1710-15 in the hope that changes over time would be discernable. Each group was then ranked by appraised value. There were no obvious lines of division except for the top two or three percent after the turn of the century. Therefore, following Gloria Main's lead, each group was divided into the bottom 30%, the lower middle 30%, the upper middle 30%, and the top 10%.¹¹ Had one of these Virginians done the division, it would perhaps have been Surry's poorer sort, middling sort, better sort and Surry's wealthy.

¹⁰ This was the rate set by law in 1682 and probably was fairly close the actual price of tobacco most during of the period. William Waller Hening, The Statutes At Large, Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia..., 13 vols., (Richmond, 1823), 2:506.

¹¹ Gloria L. Main, Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720, (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1982).

Chapter II

Surry's Poorer Sort: The Bottom Thirty Percent

There were sixty men and women who fall into the category of the bottom 30%. Inventories taken after their deaths were valued from as little as £3-5-1 to as much as £34-16-2. In the decade of the 1690s the mean was about £12. The next decade was a more prosperous one; although the poorest inventory was recorded then, the values tended to be higher than either the preceding or subsequent periods. The mean was about £22 (£24 if only independent householders are counted). Most of the people inventoried during this decade were householders, that is living in their own homes rather than as a dependent or boarder in someone else's. The next period, 1710-15, was not as prosperous judging from the inventories. The values ranged from £3-15-3 to £28-18-8 with a mean of about £18. If only the householders are counted then the mean is close to £22. Those who clearly or probably had independent households went from nine in 1690-99 to sixteen in 1700-09 to thirteen in 1710-15

Twenty-two of the sixty (37%) were possibly, or most certainly, not independent householders; the criteria for independent householding status was the inclusion in the inventory of both bedding and minimal kitchen equipment. The minimum kitchen equipment necessary for independent

housekeeping was not very extensive: an iron pot, perhaps a pothook to suspend the pot over the fire, a spit, a ladle or flesh fork, and a few dishes. If the dishes were wooden they might or might not be listed. In some inventories kitchen ware might be lumped together as "a parcell of old lumber."¹ Such a designation makes it impossible to determine whether or not the individual in question was a householder. Henry Baker who died in the spring of 1701 is an example of this difficulty. His inventory taken on April 17th and valued at 2365 pounds of tobacco (E11-16-6 cash) was:

A pcell of [?] valued at	150
a pcell of lumber at	060
a pcell of Ditto at	060
a pcell of lumber at	080
a pcell of lumber at	200
a pcell of lumber at	040
6 hoggs	285
1 heifer of 2 yrs old	200
1 old horse	450
1 young horse saddle and bridle	650
1 suite of cloathes	150
a small pcell of lumber	040 ²
	<u>2365</u>

The first and fifth parcels of lumber listed have large enough values that they might represent a bed and a few pieces of kitchen ware but it is impossible to be sure. Sarah Baker was listed on the inventory as Henry's executrix

¹ The phrase "a parcell of lumber" is equivalent to our "a bunch of stuff" and does not necessarily indicate wooden items.

² Surry County, Deeds, Wills, etc., Book 5, 1694-1709, p.229.

and there was a Sarah Baker listed on the quitrent roll in 1704 holding fifty acres of land.³ If Sarah was Henry's widow then Henry was a householder; uncertainty requires that Henry be listed as a probable householder. Fortunately most inventories are more explicit and detailed than Baker's.

There were eleven non-householders that died in the period 1690-99. Their inventories ranged from £4-15-0 to £15-18-7 with a mean of about £12 (approximately the same range and mean as that of the householders in this period). The prosperity of the next decade, 1700-09, is reflected in the inventories of non-householders. They range from £3-5-1 to £30-16-4 with a mean of about £17 but there are only four of them. There were seven non-householders who died in the period 1710-15. Their inventoried wealth ranges from £3-15-3 to £13-12-0.

Typical of the non-householders were James Robinson, Thomas Chessett and Edward Clark. James Robinson died in the spring of 1697 with an estate valued at £10-1-0. His inventory taken on April 28th was:

one mare with foal 2 bridles one	
sadle & sadle cloath	850
one broadcloath coat one pair of	
callamanco breeches and one caster hatt	550
5 pair hose two pair shoes two pair of	
drawers	150
one pcell of lumber	120
to linen	120

³ John Bennett Boddie, Colonial Surry, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1966), p.213.

one old broadcloth coat	140
one chest	<u>080</u>
	2010 ⁴

Thomas Chessett's inventory was taken on December 13, 1700 and was appraised at £3-5-1. Unlike Robinson he owned no livestock; the bulk of his estate was made up of clothing. The appraisers found:

an old broad cloath coate lined	100
a stuffe vest and breeches lined	130
an old kersey coate & breeches	040
a pare of ticking breeches & a pre of new canvas drawers	035
two old hatts	030
three els of (?) linning	030
two old shirts	015
1 pre of old shoes & 1 pre of old stockings	030
two hankerchee and 1 neckcloth	020
5 doz: of cotten buttons & thread	016
a prayer book & knife & fork & a paire of (?) tongs & tob: 2 old combes old rasers old pre of gloves	034
1 gun unfixt	120
and a sword	<u>040</u>
	640
one pre of carpenters compasses	008 ⁵
one pre of sizars	003 ⁵

Edward Clark's inventory, taken November 2, 1713, did not even mention his clothes. His estate was valued at £10-10-7 and had the following:

to six cows & calves at 30/1 ¹ s	9-0-0
to 11 1/2 ¹ pewter at 10 ^d p ¹	0-9-7
to ten old plates at 6 ^d each	0-5-0
to cross cut saw & two files at	0-10-0
to broaken pewter amounting to	<u>0-6-0</u>
	£ 10-10-7 ⁶

⁴ Book 5, p.138.

⁵ Book 5, p.222.

⁶ Book 6, 1709-1715, p.175.

Some of these non-householders had once been independent householders. Honour Meads had been while she was married. Her husband William died in 1696 leaving an estate of £15-17-0. When she died fifteen years later, she was presumably living with children, kin or neighbors (a John Bruce presented the inventory to the court). Of the things her husband had left, she had only a chest and the bed and its "sorry blanketts" (they had been listed as "indifferent" in William's inventory). The rest of her inventory was comprised of her clothing, fabric, an ivory comb, one half thousand pins, "two pr of nittin needles", a water pail and one pottle pot (a two quart pot).⁷

Three of the non-householders were atypical. Mr. Bartholomew Clements was one. Not only was he accorded the honorific "mister", but about 37.5% of the value of his estate of £7-17-0 was in a parcel of books. He had, as well, an inkhorn, four scales, one card, and a nocturnal, which is an astronomical instrument for determining the hour of the night.⁸ The rest of his estate was made up of his clothing (46%), a sea bed (?) and bedding, a knife, fork and razor. Col. William Walters of Accomack owed him two months wages.⁹ Mr. Clements was perhaps a schoolmaster.

Thomas Burnett, another non-householder, was minister

⁷ Book 5, p.105; Book 6, p.57.

⁸ Oxford English Dictionary, 1971 ed., s.v.

⁹ Book 6, pp.172, 189.

of Lawnes Creek Parish.¹⁰ He died in the early autumn of 1702 with an estate worth £30-16-4. His clothes made up 55% of the value of the estate; his books, a chest and a quire of paper, 41%. The remainder was made of his bedding, razors, knife, penknife, bottles and a can (cane?).¹¹

Richard Hargrave's inventory is also atypical. He was a boatwright. His clothing was 25% of the total £16-5-1 that his estate was worth. He owned a Bible and four old books, two old guns and a shot bag, a feather bed (a rather expensive item), three chests and a box, a chamber pot and some fabric (linen, kersey, and serge for clothing). He had a parcel of old tools, a pitch pot and hooks, and a ladle. At his death he had "the floare of a boate on the stocks," two cotten gins--one finished and one not, and one old split canoe and "one 12 foot boat bilding." The debts charged against the estate outweighed the appraised value. He owed 2250 pounds of tobacco for three years and nine months accommodations. He owed Mr. Jackman, Mr. Cock and Captain Hoult money for paying "ye levey." He also owed money for three white oak timber trees, carting home timber and plank,

¹⁰ Boddie, p.151 lists him as minister of the parish in 1702. Such a short tenure could explain his lack of householding, since by law a parish was obligated to supply its incumbent with a glebe and house. In addition, the minister's salary fixed by law in 1696 was 16,000 L of tobacco. Hening, 3:152.

¹¹ Book 5, p. 249. A quire of paper is twenty-four sheets. OED, s.v.

and three gallons of tar.¹²

It did not take very much to set up housekeeping. John Hummontt died in 1699 with an estate of only £4-5-0. The inventory that Elizabeth, his administratrix, presented to the probate court was:

2 small sowes 9 piggs & 3 shoates at	250
1 feather bed 1 old bedstead 1 feather pillow 2 blanketts	400
1 spitt a pcell of old lumber at	100
1 small iron pott & hookes 1 meale barrell	
2 old skillettts 2 old meal sifters	
2 glass bottles 1 brass candlestick 1 small earthen dish	<u>100</u>
	850 ¹³

As spartan as this may seem, the feather bed, bedstead and brass candlestick all speak of niceties beyond sheer necessity.

Robert Howes' and William Johnson's households were more typical. Howes was inventoried March 11, 1698/9 with an appraised value of £11-11-6. He left:

Imp ^s to one cow & calfe	350
to 2 barron cowes at 300 cash	600
to 4 yearlings	300
to one old feather bed bolster 1 rugg	<u>350</u>
	1600
to 6 pewter dishes 1 plate 1 flaggon	
3 spoones 1 salt	100
to 1 iron pott 1 frying pan 1 spitt 1	

¹² Book 5, p.321. The cotton gin existed before Eli Whitney, being an ancient device, but was suitable only for Sea Island cotton. Upland cotton, until Whitney's gin, had to be de-seeded by hand. Kax Wilson, A History of Textiles, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1979), p.17; and Bertha S. Dodge, Cotton: The Plant That Would Be King, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), p.53.

¹³ Book 5, p.173. A shoat is a young weaned pig. OED, s.v.

pestle 1 pre of flesh forkes 1 pre pott	
hookes & racks 1 smoothing iron 1 hoe 1	
axe 1 drawing knife 1 file 2 gimletts 1	
sickle	170
to 1 table & forme	120
to 3 old chistts (chests)	90
to 1 paile 1 piggin 1 old sifter	30
to 1 caske ab ^t 50 ga ^{ll}	25
to 1 serge wastcoate & drawers	120
to 1 castor hatt	50
to 2 quart bottles 1 old brase candlestick	10
	2315 ¹⁴

The inventory of her husband William's estate that Elizabeth Johnson brought to the probate court in the summer of 1710 was richer in both things and livestock. Its value was £26-11-7. Livestock comprised 54% of Robert Howes estate; it made up 74% of Johnson's. Unlike Howes he had swine and horses as well as cattle. And unlike most people in the bottom 30%, it is likely that he owned land. There was a Wm. Johnson on the quitrent roll of 1704 for 360 acres.¹⁵ He died owning:

to one cow one heifer four year old one	
heifer three year old at	1100
to 2 three year old steers att	500
to 1 four year old heifer att	350
to 1 three year old heifer & two year olds	500
to 1 sow and eight shoates att	440
to 1 old horse bridle and saddle	400
to 1 young horse three years old att	650
to a parcell of old pewter just nine pound	
att 9 pr pound	81
to 2 middlin iron potts with hooks one	

¹⁴ Book 6, p.172.

¹⁵ Boddie, p.214. Of those in the bottom 30% who died after 1705, seven, or 24%, were on the quitrent roll of 1704. Their holdings ranged from 150 to 1000 acres, with a mean of 341 acres, or if the largest is left out, 231 acres. Presumably the majority of the poorer sort were tenants rather than landowners.

old frying pan one tongs	190
to 1 washing tub 2 pails 2 milk trays	75
to 1 chest att 80 to 1 old spinning wheel	
50 2 pr wool chards 30	160
to 1 crosscut saw 1 handsaw 3 old axes	
3 old weeding hoes and a par ¹ tools	280
to 1 iron pestle 4 iron wedges 1 old box	
iron 2 heaters 1 pr flesh forks	90
to 1 old cattle (cattail) bed and boulder	
pillow 3 old blanketts and bedstead	350
to 1 small brass skillett 1 milk pan 1	
butter pott and a parcell lumber	100
to 1 old pr wheels	50
	<u>5316</u> ¹⁶

Although the value of the estates in the bottom 30% varied from one decade to the next, there was little change in what these people possessed. There was a slight increase in the size of cattle herds Surry's poorer folk were likely to have. In the decade of the 1690s only three had between six and ten cattle and two had more than ten. In the period 1710-15 nine decedents had six to ten cattle and two had more than ten (one of them over twenty). There was a very slight increase in sheep ownership-- from none in the 1690s to four in the decade following and three in the six years after that. There was a slight increase in the incidence of ownership of swine; in the 1690s about as many inventories listed swine as did not, in 1700-09 more than twice as many did. There was a slight decrease in the following six years with only one and a half as many inventories showing swine as not. Horse ownership stayed fairly constant. About half of the people had horses-- usually just one or two. Only

¹⁶ Book 6, p.31.

four individuals in the entire period had three or more.

Essential to agrarian life are the tools to grow and process crops, and essential to the growth of tobacco was the hoe. Few fields were plowed; the necessary cultivation was done by hoeing. Each tobacco hill was hoed as many as three times during the growing season.¹⁷ Corn too, that staple of the Virginian diet, was cultivated by hoe. Hoes were important enough for their differences to be distinguished by name: broad or narrow, or hilling, grubbing, or weeding. It is therefore interesting to note that of the nine householders in 1690-99 only two-thirds of them had hoes listed in their inventories. In the following decade only one-quarter of the householders did and in the six years following, slightly over half did. Five inventories for the whole twenty-six years listed unspecified "tools". Hoes, although essential, were not very expensive. Roger Williams in 1709 owned an axe, a grubbing hoe, and a pessell (pestle) which together were appraised at thirty pounds of tobacco, or three shillings. James Griffen's inventory in 1712 lists one grubbing hoe for two shillings. James Jones' inventory in 1713 listed "a parcell of necessary tools consisting cheifly of hows wedges ax & spaid pestill" for seventeen shillings sixpence.¹⁸

¹⁷ T.H. Breen, Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of the Revolution, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), p.48.

¹⁸ Book 5, p.412; Book 6, pp.94-5, 150-1.

Lawrence Fleming's inventory, taken in 1711, was one of those which did not list a hoe, and yet he clearly was an active farmer. He paid a quitrent in 1704 for 360 acres and the appraisers of his estate listed "last years crop tob^o", five barrels and two bushels of corn, and twelve pounds of unprocessed cotton. His appraisers lumped his agricultural tools and possibly some of his kitchen ware under "a parcell of old iron" worth 90 pounds of tobacco.¹⁹ Saddles and bridles were more frequently mentioned than the essential and probably ubiquitous hoe. This is probably a case of deliberate under-reporting, for even if these householders worked for others, they would still need a hoe for their garden plots.

While 28% of all the inventories of Surry's poorer sort listed hoes, 32% listed axes. Eight of the inventories mentioning axes were taken in the decade of the 1690s. Twenty percent of all the inventories listed carpenter's and builder's tools. Only three inventories, all in the decade following 1700, listed cooper's tools. Hogsheads, barrels, casks, rundlets for the storage and shipping of agricultural products and the tubs and pails necessary for farm life required special tools and special skill to produce. Men with the tools and skills tended to be better off than Surry's poorer folk who had to look to their neighbors for these essential items. Equipment using draft animals,

¹⁹ Boddie, p.213; Book 6, p.58.

carts, harrows and plows, appear seldom and then mostly after 1710.

Equipment for the production of fabric was important; sixty-two percent of the households after 1700 had at least one spinning wheel, close to a quarter had more than one. Before 1700 only one inventory listed a spinning wheel. In three inventories cotton gins were listed. Only two looms were listed. It took at least four spinners to keep one weaver in yarn²⁰; in Surry County as a whole there were nine or ten times as many households that had spinning wheels as had looms, and many of these had more than one wheel. Based on this imbalance, it seems that textile manufacturing was an intermittent activity for most households. Moreover, the manufacture of homespun was relatively rare before 1700. Sheep were seldom kept by anyone before that date and no inventory in the lower 60% lists the raw materials, cotton, wool and flax, before the turn of the century.

Twenty-three percent of the inventories listed guns and eight percent powder and shot. Only two estates had guns in the decade of the 1690s. Travelers' tales speak of the importance of game and wild fowl in the diets of the colonists and guns for hunting were important. But there is a dramatic difference in the incidence of guns in inventories between this group and the next in wealth; sixty-three percent of the lower middle 30% had guns.

²⁰ Wilson, p.241.

Swords and rapiers were about as common in both groups: 12% of the bottom 30% had them and 15% of the lower middle 30%. All but one of the swords in the bottom 30% were listed in inventories taken in the decade following the turn of the century.

The difference in the incidence of guns between the inventories of the bottom 30% and the lower middle 30% may lie in the militia laws. All free males from 16 to 60 years of age, with a few exceptions, were liable for militia duty. All men serving in the militia were required to provide the arms suitable for their rank and two pounds of powder and eight pounds of shot. But the acts requiring this provision also specified that the arms and ammunition were exempt from impressment, "distresse, seizure, attachment or execution."²¹ Since one of the major reasons inventories were taken was to ensure the decedent's creditors were satisfied, perhaps the appraisers omitted the guns of poor men so that their heirs could meet their civic responsibility.

Eleven of the inventories (18%) did not mention beds; most people, whether householders or not, had at least one bed. More than half (59%) of the individuals that had beds had only one. Thirteen had two and only three inventories listed three beds. None had more than three. Cattails, flock, occasionally chaff, and feathers were used to fill

²¹ Hening, 3:13-14, 335-42.

the bed ticking but the inventories seldom specified which kind of bed was being appraised. Thirteen of the inventories listed feather beds; eleven mentioned bedsteads. Beds varied in value but the difference in price could be substantial; an old cattail bed could be worth as little as thirty pounds of tobacco (three shillings) but a feather bed with rug, bolster, blankets, and bedstead could be as much as 800 pounds of tobacco. John and Elizabeth Hummont's feather bed, bedstead, feather pillow and two blankets were appraised at 400 pounds of tobacco, which was close to half the entire value of John's estate.²² Judging from the appraised values, most often when just "bed and furniture" was listed, furniture refers not to a bedstead but rather to the bed's furnishings: rug or coverlet, bolster and pillows, blankets and sometimes sheets and pillowcases. The decade following 1700 saw a slight increase in both feather beds and bedsteads for Surry's poorer sort.

Chests and boxes must have provided the majority of households with seating; only eight inventories listed chairs, five listed forms (benches) and seven listed couches and a number of inventories mentioned both chairs and forms or all three.

Interior lighting was provided chiefly by the fire; only six inventories, one tenth, mentioned candlesticks. Possibly more households had candlesticks, appraisers

²² Book 5, pp.202, 412, 173.

lumping them with an undifferentiated "lumber," but it is impossible to tell.

The hearth was central to the life of the household and much of the household's activities. Only one third of the inventories (41% of the households) had spits, pothooks and pot-racks for cooking. Only 20% of the households had fire shovels and tongs; only one of the inventories listed andirons. For those households that had no iron spits or pothooks, pots and kettles were suspended over the fire from a wooden lug pole which rested on ledges in the sides of the chimney throat. Many pots and all skillets came equipped with legs and sat directly in the embers when in use.²³ Brass pots, pans and kettles were present in seven inventories; copper in one.

Corn was the dietary staple and both mortar and pestles and grindstones to make meal and hominy out of it appear in the inventories. But only 14% of the households had mortars or pestles listed in their estates and only three inventories mentioned grindstones. Since mortars and pestles were often made of wood they too were probably frequently lumped together with the "lumber." Spice mortars appear only three times, all in the period 1700-09, indicating again that the prosperity of this decade extended down the economic scale.

²³ Mary Earle Gould, The Early American House: Household Life in America, 1620-1850, (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1965), pp.67-76.

About half of the households owned pewter ware. Some of the inventories specify what kind of ware: porringers, basins, plates, dishes. But more often the pewter is simply listed and appraised by weight. Earthenware was mentioned specifically in only a quarter of the inventories although the actual incidence of it undoubtedly was higher. Wooden trenchers and other wooden ware were mentioned twice. Although the ceramic and pewter type and form such as plates and porringers, bowls and basins and butter pots are mentioned, there is no way to compare the ratio of hollowware to flatware as an indicator of diet or wealth.²⁴

Food processing equipment is seldom mentioned. Considering the number of cattle and swine that even the poorest had it is interesting that gear to process milk and cheese or make bacon and ham is rarely mentioned in any of the 221 inventories. For the bottom 30%, powdering tubs, for salting down meat, are mentioned once and milk trays, pans and cheese-making equipment are found three times. Cider and beer casks are mentioned in four inventories.

Table and bed linen were obviously viewed as luxuries. Only three estates had table linen or bed linen apart from what was on the bed. Table knives and forks were another

²⁴ The premise put forth by some archaeologists is that the number of bowls (hollowware) to plates (flatware) reflects diet--stews and porridges versus roast meats and also in the 17th century reflects wealth differences. See William M. Kelso, Kingsmill Plantations, 1619-1800: Archaeology of Country Life in Colonial Virginia, (New York: Academic Press, 1984), pp.177-79.

luxury; only two inventories had them compared to thirteen which had spoons. Ivory combs, silver of any kind, and warming pans were also very rare. Box irons and heaters, or smoothing irons, for ironing clothes were listed in nine inventories (15%). Razors were listed in only four estates, all after 1700. The most frequently mentioned luxury items were looking glasses which appear in six inventories. Chamber pots were mentioned in two inventories, both in the decade of the 1700s. Looking glass was a euphemism for chamber pot at this time²⁵ and it is impossible to tell whether the appraisers were counting mirrors or chamber pots when they wrote down "looking glass". In either case, it was rare enough to be a luxury.

Books were widespread enough not to judge them a luxury. One quarter of the inventories listed books, all but two of them before 1710.²⁶ Most of the households which had books had only one. Only eight inventories listed books by title and five of them were Bibles. Only one estate listed a prayer book and one a hornbook.²⁷ Most of the inventories simply mentioned a "book." The only book

²⁵ OED, s.v.

²⁶ The relative booklessness of the period after 1709 I have no explanation for. It does not occur for any other group in the society.

²⁷ A hornbook is a leaf of paper with the alphabet, and sometimes numbers and the Lord's Prayer on it, protected by a thin layer of horn, used in teaching children to read. OED, s.v.

mentioned by title belonged to Samuel Newton who appears from his inventory to have perhaps kept an ordinary. His inventory lists fourteen books and "1 large booke called caues history of the primitive fathers".²⁸

Clothing was frequently inventoried, but in only eleven cases did it account for more than 15% of the total value of the estate.

Supplies and raw materials were infrequently listed in the inventories. Perishable items like eggs, fresh vegetables and fruits were never appraised although they were doubtless a significant part of the Virginian diet. Only seven inventories mentioned materials like nails, leather and hides, shoemakers thread, and timber. Fabric and sewing notions were listed in six inventories. It should be noted as a measure of its importance fabric is never, in any of the 221 inventories, listed generically. The appraisers always listed it by length, in ells or yards, and by type, such as osnaburg, serge, kersey, linen, shalloon.²⁹ Corn, either growing in the field or stored, was the most common consumption item, appearing thirteen times. Tobacco was next, being mentioned in nine

²⁸ Book 6, p.312.

²⁹ Fifty-six different names for fabric were used in all the inventories. The most common were osnaburg, or ozenbriggs as it was spelled in Surry, "virginia cloth," dowlas, holland, and linen, all various linen products; serge, kersey, callamanco and broadcloth of wool; and fustian, calico and dimity of cotton. Wilson, pp.244-46. An ell is 45 inches. OED, s.v.

inventories. All other items for consumption appeared less frequently: feathers six times, deerskins and pelts three times, tallow or beeswax only once. Salt, beans, bacon, dried or fresh meat appeared one or two times, all after 1700. Wheat was mentioned only twice, both times in the period 1700-09. Spices did not appear in these inventories.

The typical householder in the bottom 30%, then, had a cow or two, a few swine, and perhaps a riding horse. He rented the land he farmed and grew tobacco and corn. After 1700, he perhaps grew a little cotton as well. He had his working tools, primarily hoes, an axe or two, a saw or other carpenter's tools. His house was furnished with a bed, a few chests and boxes, a spinning wheel and a table. His kitchen ware included a couple of iron pots, pothooks, a spit, a ladle, a flesh fork, perhaps a skillet, some pewter dishes, plates and porringers, some earthenware, and half a dozen spoons. He had few clothes, perhaps one coat, waistcoat and breeches, possibly two, a couple of shirts, a pair of shoes and stockings and a hat. He owned no books and probably did not have a gun, although if he had a gun he may have had a sword as well. When the neighbors the court appointed as appraisers came to his house after his death, they saw and noted these things. Other things, some of them necessary to rural life, like the powdering tub needed to turn a hog into bacon and ham, they overlooked or appraised as "a parcell of lumber."

Chapter III

Surry's Middling Sort: The Lower Middle Thirty Percent

The sixty men and women that fall into this category were much like their poorer neighbors except that they had more livestock and more things. Almost all of them appear to have been householders. The value of the estates of those who died in the decade of the 1690s ranged from £16-6-0 to £37-10-0 with a mean of about £24. In the following decade the values were from £35-11-2 to £59-1-1 with a mean of £47. In the period of 1710-15 the values ranged from £29-0-7 to £50-6-8 with an average of about £39.

A larger proportion of these people were landowners than were their poorer neighbors. Of the people who died after the 1704 quitrent roll was compiled, only about a quarter of the bottom 30% were on the roll in 1704 with an average land holding of over 200 acres. The mean land holding for the comparable group in the lower middle 30% was about 280 acres with a range from 60 to 1400 acres. But there were more landholders in this latter group than in the former one. Some uncertainty exists because of possible variations in the spelling of names, but at least eleven and possibly fourteen (that is, 32% to 41%) of the individuals in the lower middle 30% were landholders.¹

¹ Boddie, pp.213-15.

None of the inventories of the lower middle 30% were without livestock. In the decade of the 1690s, livestock represented over 70% of the total appraised value of the estate for 44% of the decedents (eight individuals). For the same number it represented between 41-70%. The following decade and a half saw a decrease in the percentage that livestock represented in the total inventory and an increase in the numbers of cattle, swine, sheep and horses owned. Unlike their poorer neighbors, all but three of these men and women died owning cattle. The majority of decedents in the 1690s had between six and ten. There was an increase in the size of herds these middling sort possessed in the following years. During the years 1700-09 almost as many inventories listed 16-20 cattle as listed 6-10. This prosperous decade saw the death of one person who owned a herd of 35 cattle. The six years after 1710 saw a decrease in the size of the herds with the majority having between 6-15.

There were only five people in this group who did not own swine compared to twenty-four in the bottom 30%. The numbers of hogs, barrows and shoats that the middling sort held were larger.² Twenty-three inventories had herds in excess of twenty swine and ten had an unspecified "parcell." There was, just as with cattle, an increase in the size of

² Both barrow and hog are terms for castrated pigs raised for slaughter. OED, s.v.

herds in the years following 1700.

Only seven individuals in the bottom 30% had kept sheep; eighteen in the lower middle 30% did. Ten of the eighteen inventories which listed sheep were in the period of 1710-15. The size of the flocks were larger, in general, than for the poorer sort. Half of the eighteen held flocks of between 6-10 sheep and three had more than eleven; four of the seven inventories in the bottom 30% which had sheep listed 1-5.

Hugh Jones, writing in 1724, was under the impression that most Virginians had horses:

They are such lovers of riding, that almost every ordinary person keeps a horse; and I have known some spend the morning in ranging several miles in the woods to find and catch their horses only to ride two or three miles to church, to the courthouse or to a horse race, where they generally appoint to meet upon business.

Jones' observation that most ordinary people kept horses holds true for Surry County after the turn of the century. Like the bottom 30%, in the decade of the 1690s about as many of the middling sort had horses as did not and those who did had but one or two. However, the two groups differ after 1700. While their poorer neighbors' likelihood of owning horses did not change, only 17% of the middling sort after 1700 owned no horses. Of those who did, most owned

³ Hugh Jones, The Present State of Virginia, ed. Richard L. Morton, (Chapel Hill; University of North Carolina Press for the Virginia Historical Society, 1956), p.84.

just one or two; another 17% had three to five.

Travelers' accounts reveal that, in general, Virginians let their livestock range free and did not care for them according to European standards. The Reverend John Clayton, who lived in Virginia from 1684-86, said:

They be coveteous of large ranges for their stock & let them run over a vast tract of land & the beast being pend in pens as our sheep are at nights in the morning they run themselves out of breath traceing 2 or 3 miles & spend themselvs before they fall to a settled feeding whereas were their pastures divided & one part preservd whilst another were eating the cattle would feed to mch more advantage the same is remarkable likewise in Sheep whereof as yet they have but small flocks by reason of the woodynesse of the Country & the frequency of wolves[.]⁴

He did not think much of Virginian animal husbandry. Although he admitted that the pork they produced by letting their swine range free in the woods was superior to English pork, something that other travellers agreed on, he said that "they are likewise very mch defective in makeing the best advantage hereof," for their breeding sows "being feeble & weake they breed not near so oft as they otherwise would & then they cannot suckle past 2 or 3 or 4 piggs at the most some of wch are the Eagles prey runing in the woods whilst young."⁵

Elsewhere Clayton complained to the Royal Society that

⁴ Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy S. Berkeley, eds. "Another 'Account of Virginia' By the Reverend John Clayton", Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 76:4 (October 1968): 419.

⁵ "Another 'Account'", p.419.

"They neither house nor Milk any of their Cows in Winter, having a Notion that it would kill them." Virginians provided little fodder for their cattle and according to Clayton some persons lost from ten to thirty head a winter. Clayton's advice to the planters on the care of their stock, like his advice on the draining of swamp lands was generally ignored; "they have either been so conceited of their old way, so sottish as to not apprehend, or so negligent as not to apply themselves thereto."⁶

Poultry and bees were mentioned in fourteen inventories (23%); they had not been mentioned in any of the inventories of the bottom 30% and were mentioned only seven times in the upper middle 30% (11% of the inventories) and four times in the top 10% (43%). Poultry for eggs, meat and feathers and bees for honey, beeswax, and the pollination of fruit trees and other crops were, however useful, not essential items. The care of poultry was generally considered a woman's province, and the absence of poultry in the inventories of the bottom 30% may reflect not so much a lack of poultry as a perception that the hens belonged to the widow. Four of the seven women whose inventories belong to the lower middle 30% had poultry. That is, 29% of the

⁶ "A Letter from Mr John Clayton, rector of Crofton at Wakefield in Yorkshire, to the Royal Society, May 12. 1688. Giving an account of several Observations in Virginia, and in his Voyage thither, more particularly concerning the Air", Force's Collection of Historical Tracts, vol. 1, ed. Peter Force, (Washington, 1836-46; reprint ed., 1963), pp.25-26, 21.

inventories with poultry or bees were women's inventories while women made up only 12% of the total number of inventories for this group. However, none of the other women whose estates were inventoried or appraised had poultry listed. That the lower middle 30% had twice as many inventories with poultry than the upper middle 30% may reflect not a greater frequency but rather a greater relative importance of poultry in the estates of the middling sort; a handful of hens may have seemed negligible in wealthier households and therefore not appraised.

The tools needed for rural and agrarian life were found more often in these inventories than for the bottom 30%. Thirty-five percent of the estates listed hoes compared to 28% among the poorer sort. Axes were mentioned about as often and carpenter's and builder's tools were more common: 28% of the inventories had them compared to 20% of the inventories in the bottom 30%. Seven of these people had boats or canoes while only three of their poorer neighbors did. Cooper's tools were more common: seven, or 12%, of the inventories had them while only three of the bottom 30% did. Although none of the appraisers had listed draft animals in these inventories, more of this group had harrows, harnesses and yokes, and carts. None of these items were common but the middling sort had twice as many harrows and close to four times as many carts as did their poorer neighbors.

Spinning wheels were found in half the households of both groups and almost all of them after 1700. However more households in the middling group had more than one wheel. Of the households with spinning wheels, 40% of them in the lower middle 30% listed two while in the bottom 30% only 22% had two wheels. Looms were about as rare; only three inventories listed them, all after 1710. Cotton gins were mentioned just once. The raw materials for textile production were more common. Eighteen percent listed cotton and 23% listed wool in their inventories, all after 1700. Only five inventories in the bottom 30% had cotton on hand and two had wool. Because of the increase in the number of spinning wheels and the amount of raw materials, it would seem that the production of textiles was a more important activity of Surry's middling sort than of the poorer sort. Nevertheless, the number of spinning wheels vastly outnumbered the looms; there were more than fourteen times as many.

A spinner working full-time could process about three pounds of flax, wool or cotton a week and it took at least four spinners to keep one weaver in yarn.⁷ The rarity of looms was a problem addressed by the House of Burgesses; they enacted a number of other measures meant to encourage the manufacture of textiles as well. In 1666, for example, they required that each county set up a loom and weaver at

⁷ Wilson, pp.236, 241.

the charge of the county. Premiums were offered periodically for the production of linen or wool cloth and fines were levied for the failure to produce at least a pound of dressed flax and dressed hemp a year. These efforts to encourage textile manufacture were mostly unavailing and "found to be rather a charge and inconvenience, then any benefitt to the publique."⁸

Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh have suggested, based on the rarity of looms in Maryland inventories, that textile production was primarily in knitted goods rather than woven ones.⁹ There is a limit, however, to how many sweaters, stockings, mittens, caps, and knitted baby clothes would be needed in the climate of the tidewater of Virginia. It is more likely that spinning, and textile production in general, was an intermittent activity and of less importance than the amount of equipment would suggest. Of all 221 inventories, only seventeen listed "virginia cloth" or "this countrys cloth". Some of the other serges, kerseys, osnaburgs and the like may have been of home manufacture, but it is likely that the majority were imported.

One of the most dramatic differences that distinguishes this group from the poorer sort is the

⁸ Hening, 2:238-39; 3:16, 121-22, 503-506.

⁹ "The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland", The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective, 2nd edition, edited by Michael Gordon, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), pp. 276, 286.

ownership of guns. Sixty-three percent of the inventories list guns compared to 23% of the inventories of the bottom 30%. Pistols were mentioned in three inventories, all in the decade of the 1700s. Two inventories with carbines, a short gun for use on horseback, one with a trooper's saddle and nine (15%) with swords indicates that militia roles were more important for this group than for their poorer neighbors.

The types of household goods the middling sort possessed differed from those of their poorer neighbors primarily in quantity. Only two inventories listed no beds; the majority had two beds, seven had three and one had four. The majority of their poorer neighbors had only one. More than half of this group had feather beds compared to 22% in the bottom 30%. Bedsteads were found in 36% of the inventories of the lower middle 30%, in comparison to 18% of the bottom 30%. One individual even rose to such heights of affluence as to have curtains and valance for his bed. Bedsteads were more commonly listed in the decade of the 1700s. Like bedsteads, chairs were more common in this decade than in the other periods. Chairs, more common than for the poorer sort, were however still relatively rare in these households. Only 22% of the estates of the lower middle had them. Likewise, candlesticks were more common but still relatively rare; 18% of the inventories had them compared to 10%.

The hearths of the middling sort were better furnished than their poorer neighbors. Fifty-five percent of the inventories listed spits, pothooks, or pot-racks. Twenty-eight percent mentioned fire shovels and tongs. Their poorer neighbors had spits, pothooks and pot-racks in only a third of their inventories and fire shovels and tongs in only 15% of them. Andirons appeared in only one inventory for each of the groups.

There was little difference between the two groups for much of the kitchen ware. Spice mortars, powdering tubs, milk trays, pans, and cheese-making ware, cider and beer casks all appear with about the same frequency, which is to say, seldom. There was a difference, however, in the gear to grind corn; although few households in either group had grindstones, more of the inventories for the lower middle 30% listed mortar and pestles than did those of the poorer folk: 20% compared to 12%. Earthenware pots, jugs, dishes, bowls, were equally as common in both these groups, but pewter was much more common in the households of the middling sort. Eighty-three percent of them had pewter compared to 48% of the poorer sort. Brass pots pans and kettles were also more common. The bottom 30% had brass in only 12% of their inventories. Forty-two percent of the estates of the lower middle 30% had brass cooking ware.

Extra bed and table linen was still relatively rare; only 10% of the inventories had them but this was twice that

of the bottom 30%. Likewise, box irons for ironing clothes were twice as common; 30% of the inventories of the middling sort mentioned them.

The men and women in this group had a few more luxury items than did their poorer neighbors but did not have very many. They had more razors, more chamber pots, more warming pans, more silver, and more looking glasses. Looking glasses were the most common of these items and were found in only 18% of the inventories. Razors were found in 10% and silver, in the form of a spoon, buckle, bodkin, thimble and silver-headed cane, was found in 8%, or five, of the inventories. Two inventories had watches and two had periwigs.

One of the owners of both watch and periwig was Joseph Corew. His inventory was taken on September 10, 1702 and is atypical for a number of reasons even though its total value was close to the mean for the decade. It read:

Imp ^s tto one large folding table & draw ^r	£ s d
to his wearing cloaths of wollen viz ^t 6	00-12-00
jackets 5 pre of breeches 4 coates 8 pre	
stockings a remnant of shalloon and a cupboard	
cloath	06-14-00
to linnen of sev ^l sorts (viz ^t)	
to 22: napkins 8 towells 4 pillow cases 4	
wastcoates 2 neckcloathes 2 hankercheifs 2 pre	
drawes 14 shirts a pre of sleeves 3 sheetes ^t 3	
table cloathes 2 pre thread of stockings ab ^t	
halfe a yard of flowered callicoe a peece of	
salloons (?)	05-00-00
1 small trunk 3 bookes 2 hatts 4 perewiggs	01-10-00
to 1/2 dozen of plates & 1 lookeing glass	00-07-00
to 1 large brass kettle & 1 still	03-10-00
to 1 feather 2 bolsters 1 pillow 3 blankets	
1 rugg 1 suite of callicoe curtaines & vallence	

bedstead & cord	08-00-00
to 1 suite of flowered curtaines & vallens &	
1 bag of feathers wt 32 ¹	02-10-00
to 1 great chest	00-12-00
to 1 trunk 2 earthen dishes 2 chamber potts	
2 pre new shoes 1 spitting pott	00-12-00
to 2 chests of phisitions and chirurgeons	
wares	04-00-00
to a pcell of chyrurgeons instruments	03-00-00
to 1 grey horse	03-00-00
to 1 bay horse	04-00-00
to 1 whole skirted sadle & houseing and	
kerbe bridle and 1 old small sadle & pre of	
bootes and 1 halter	01-00-00
to 1 mare and colt	03-17-06 ¹⁰
	<u>48-04-6</u>

He had, in addition to these things "one pr of money scales and weights on pr brass scales & weights one pr of shoes one tin candle box and funnell" as well as " three peices of eight," "1 old watch sent to England" and "1 old close stoole pan."

Joseph Corew had the clothes and the luxury items to support the dignity of his profession as physician and surgeon and the transportation to enable him to make his rounds. But he did not practice farming on the side, for he had no agricultural tools and no livestock other than his horses. He did not have much in the way of mundane kitchen equipment, so it is not clear that he was an independent householder.

A more typical inventory for the lower middle 30% is that of John Pulistone who died in October 1707. The

¹⁰ Surry County, Deeds, Wills, etc., Book 5, 1694-1709, p.279. Chirurgeon is an old form of the word surgeon. OED, s.v.

inventory that his widow returned to the court was valued at £53-14-6. The appraisers found:

Imp ^s 2 cows 4 heafers 1 calf	2200
1 sow 3 piggs 6 shotes	300
1 young mare	450
2 beeds and furture	2350
6 leather chaires 2 tables	600
4 chests 2 boxs 1 spin wheel and cards	500
50 ^L puter at 7 ^d 12 plates at 6 pr ^t	422
2 tankerds 18 spoones 3 cand sticks 2 salts	
2 poringers 1 chamber pott 2 cupts	200
4 iron potts wt 145 ^{lb} at 3 ^d 2 pott racks 2	
iron pestles 1 gun 1 spitt some old iron	330
a par ^t of old lumber and 1 bible	350
	7702
tobacco	953
	sum 8655
1 horse	£ 8-00-00
money	£ 2-09-00
	sum £ 10-09-00 ¹¹

With its chairs and candlesticks, John and Ann Pulistone's house was better furnished than most of their neighbors who are characterized as the middling sort.

Books were more common with this group of middling people as well. Thirty-two percent of the inventories listed books compared to one quarter of the estates of the poorer sort. All but three of the book-owners had more than one, while half their poorer counterparts had but one. Eleven of the inventories simply listed a "parcell of books." Books were not listed by title except for the five inventories that mentioned Bibles and the one that had a hornbook and a primer.¹²

¹¹ Book 5, 1694-1709, pp.383-84.

¹² A primer is an elementary school book used for teaching children to read.OED, s.v.

The lower middle 30% generally had more stores of raw materials and supplies than their poorer neighbors. Twenty-eight percent of their inventories listed hides, leather, nails and timber compared to 12% of the poorer group. Thirteen percent listed deerskins and pelts, compared to 5% of the bottom 30%'s inventories. Stores of wheat, peas and beans, and bacon were about as infrequent in both groups, but almost twice as many inventories of the middling sort listed fresh or dried meat. Thirteen percent of the inventories of the lower middle 30% listed tobacco--about the same as for the bottom 30%. Salt was more common, mentioned in 17% of the inventories of the middling sort and in only 3% of their poorer neighbors. Stores of corn also were more common. The appraisers mentioned them in 32% of the inventories of the lower middle 30% and in only 22% of the bottom 30%.

One thing that sets this group of inventories apart from the others is the number of women's estates. The bottom 30% included just one woman's inventory, which was 2% of the total. The upper middle 30% included four, or 7% and the top 10% included one, or 4%. Three of the seventeen unappraised estates were women's. The lower middle 30% on the other hand, included seven women's inventories which constituted 12% of all those inventoried.¹³

¹³ Carr and Walsh in a study of 17th century Maryland inventories, found only 3% of 1,735 inventories were women's, indicating a high rate of remarriage. These

There are some things which can be said of these sixteen women. At least eleven of them were widows; either they are listed as widows on the inventory, or their executor is listed as their son, or their will is available and mentions children. For seven of them, their husband's inventory is also available with them listed as executrix. Based on the inventories, most of the women are independent householders. The only woman estate-holder in the bottom 30% was not and neither were two of the three women whose estates were not appraised. But at least six and possibly all of those in the lower middle 30% were independent householders still. Moreover, all the others wealthier were as well. Only four of the ten women who died after 1704 were land owners based on the quitrent rolls of 1704.¹⁴

Although the numbers are small, the seven women's inventories in the lower middle 30% (12% of the total), is an anomaly that needs explaining. The social pressures on women to remarry were strong.¹⁵ Perhaps the explanation

inventories were from the second half of the century and may not be strictly comparable to the data from Surry County. Carr and Walsh, "The Planter's Wife", p.274.

¹⁴ Boddie, pp.213-215. It is interesting in this connection that 7% of the individuals paying quitrents in 1704 were women (20 out of 276). They ranged from Sarah Baker's 50 acres to Elizabeth Ruffin's 3001 acres.

¹⁵ See Carr and Walsh, "The Planter's Wife". See also Lorena S. Walsh, " 'Till Death Us Do Part': Marriage and Family in Seventeenth-Century Maryland" and Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, " 'Now-wives and Sons-in-Law': Parental Death in a Seventeenth-Century Virginia County" in The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century.

lies in matters of economics. For the poorer sort, economic necessity required remarriage. For the affluent and the wealthy, their riches made them especially attractive. Marriage with a rich widow was one of the ways to wealth and status in Virginia. The women of the middling sort, on the other hand, had sufficient wealth to remain independent if they chose, but not enough, perhaps, to make them economically particularly attractive as potential spouses.

The middling sort in Surry County, then, were comfortably off. Their estates reflected the prosperity of the tobacco boom of 1696-1702. They had, as a group, larger herds of cattle and swine after the turn of the century than before; fewer of them were horseless. They put their extra money into more beds and into bedsteads, into spinning wheels and chairs, into brass kettles and household linens, into box irons and warming pans. But it would be an error to think that most of them had extra money for the niceties that chairs and linens, candlesticks and brass kettles represent. Sufficiency rather than luxury characterizes their inventories.

The hypothetical decedent in the lower middle 30% had probably owned the land he worked. The appraisers appointed by the court noted his livestock, which included a herd of about ten cattle and maybe twice as many hogs. He didn't keep sheep but he had two horses. When the appraisers entered his house, they noted a couple of beds, one of which

was of feathers, a bedstead but probably no chairs. The family sat on stools and storage chests. There was a spinning wheel and the hearth was reasonably well equipped. In addition to a spit and pot hook, there were a skillet, a kettle, a flesh fork and a ladle and a brass pan. There were pewter plates, porringers and spoons on the table but no forks. It is unlikely that the chests which held his few clothes also held extra linens. He had a gun and the tools for farming. He also had a few carpenter's or cooper's tools. He had sufficient goods for a comfortable life, by Surry standards, and if death came after the tobacco boom years, 1696-1702, he probably had a few luxuries as well.

Chapter IV

Surry's Better Sort: The Upper Middle Thirty Percent

There were sixty-one individuals whose estates fell into this category. For the period 1690-99 the value of their estates ranged from £38-19-10 to £128-19-11, with a mean of about £76. For the following decade, the appraised values ranged from £61-15-8 to £176-10-0, with a mean of about £103. The men and women of this category who died in the years 1710-15 had estates worth from £51-10-7 to £114-18-0, with an average of about £74.

The estates of these people differed from those of their poorer neighbors in a number of ways. One of the more significant ways was the ownership of bound labor, either servants or slaves. No one in the bottom sixty percent died owning anyone's labor. But then, most of their well-to-do neighbors grew crops and kept house without help: fully seventy-five percent of their inventories listed neither servants nor slaves. But one quarter of Surry's better sort did have either servants or slaves, although none had both.

There were four estates that listed servants, all of them before the middle of the first decade of the eighteenth century. George Essell, who died in the spring of 1693, left an estate appraised at £112-12-5. About four percent of his estate was tied up in one servant boy who was valued

at 1000 pounds of tobacco. Essell's inventory is unique in that it lists land; one hundred acres of land was appraised at 3000 pounds of tobacco.¹ Mary Carpenter's estate, appraised on October 25, 1699, also listed one servant boy, worth 1800 pounds of tobacco, about 10% of her total worth.²

Thomas Bage, who died the following spring, had both a servant boy and a servant man. The inventory listed both by name and indicated the amount of time each had left to serve: seven years for the boy and four for the man. The man was noted as a tailor and the appraisers found the four years of service of this skilled worker and the seven years of the boy as equivalent in value. Both were worth 1500 pounds of tobacco, or about seven and a half pounds in cash. Twelve percent of Bage's total worth was in these two servants while 32% was in livestock.

Bage's inventory is one of the few which lists draft animals, three oxen in this case, but it seems likely that he spent more time working as a blacksmith than as a farmer. The appraisers noted no hoes but found the following:

to blacksmiths tools anvill vise & bellows	550
to 1 grindstone	40
to 5 iron wedges & 3 harrow teeth	200
to a pcell of old iron in the shop	900
to new barre iron	74
to sadle irons	90
to 2 yoakes & irons 1 harrow & 3 teeth to 1	
old cole cart & irons	200

¹ Surry County, Deeds, Wills, etc., Book 4, 1687-94, p.303.

² Book 5, 1694-1709, p.184.

Elsewhere in the inventory are listed nineteen files and twelve pounds of steel.³

John Drew, who died in March of 1703, is the other decedent with a servant. His inventory listed a man servant worth 300 pounds of tobacco, approximately 2% of the total estate.⁴

There were three individuals who died owning slaves in the period 1690-99, Timothy Essell, Thomas Bowman, and William Simons. Essell and Bowman had estates well above the mean. Timothy Essell's Negro woman and child were valued at 6000 pounds of tobacco which was 31% of his total estate. Thomas Bowman's one Negro slave was appraised at £25, 21% of his estate.⁵

William Simons owned four slaves, presumably a family. His inventory of August 24, 1697 reads:

	£	s	d
to 1 negro man & 1 negro woman	60	00	00
to 1 negro girle about 4 years of age	10	00	00
to 1 ditto about 1 year old at	05	00	00 ⁶
to 1 sow & foure shotes at	01	00	00

No other inventory was found for him, so he was most probably not a householder. There was a William Simons who

³ Book 5, 1694-1709, pp.205-6.

⁴ Book 5, 1694-1709, p.277.

⁵ Book 5, 1694-1709, p.106, p.186.

⁶ Book 5, 1694-1709, p.143.

died in December of 1693, one of Surry's wealthy men.⁷ His inventory listed, among other things, a Negro man and woman and three children so that it is clear the inventory of 1697 is not a very late supplemental inventory. The evidence suggests that the William Simons who died in 1697 was the son, perhaps, of the wealthy man. Although not a householder, his patrimony was large enough to put him into the category of the upper middle 30%.

Four slaveholders died in the next decade, two of them with estates above the mean and two below. River Jordan, who died in 1701, owned three slaves for 38% of his appraised worth. They were:

one negroe girle named Mary	£ 25	00	00
one negroe girle Sarah	15	00	00 ⁸
one negroe boy John	10	00	00

Judging from the value placed on Mary, she was an adult or very nearly so.

Matthew Swan's inventory of February 8, 1702/3 did not list any slaves at all, but his will indicated that he owned one slave woman named Phillis.⁹ This raises an important issue, that of under-reporting. Some wills directed that certain legacies were not to be inventoried; other wills did not give explicit directions to do so, but nevertheless, the appraisers did not include everything.

⁷ Book 4. 1687-94, pp.347-8.

⁸ Book 5, 1694-1709, pp.226-7.

⁹ Book 5, 1694-1709, p.264, p.261.

A case in point is Major Arthur Allen, one of the wealthiest men to die in this entire twenty-six year period. His inventory listed an estate worth £838-3-6. The two slaves inventoried comprised only 6% of his appraised wealth. But in his will he bequeathed twenty-eight slaves to his wife, children, sister, and grandchildren and directed that one other was to be sold.¹⁰ The inventoried slaves were the only ones not mentioned in the will and they may have been acquisitions after the will was made.

A complete survey of wills was not done, but a random one indicates that individuals like Matthew Swan and Arthur Allen were relatively rare. Most inventories seem to accurately reflect the personal estates of the decedents. Nevertheless, these figures on slaveholding should be read with some caution.

The other two slave owners who died in the decade 1700-09 both owned Indian slaves. Richard Byton had one, appraised at 3000 pounds of tobacco (approximately £15 cash). Charles Gee owned two women and one girl worth 10,400 pounds of tobacco, or 33% of his total estate.

For all the inventories with slaves, for both the upper middle 30% and the top 10%, almost 21% listed slaves explicitly as Indians. It is quite possible, however that the actual percentage of Indian slaves was much higher. The Indian slave trade was extensive during the seventeenth

¹⁰ Book 6, 1709-1715, pp.84-88, pp.33-35.

century, dealing especially with women and children. And as J. Leitch Wright, Jr. has pointed out, the presence of Indians in the South has been obscured by the looseness with which colonial records use the term "negro". The term was frequently applied to Indians and people of mixed blood as well as to Africans.¹¹

Of the four slave owners who died in the period 1710-15, one owned an Indian girl, one owned a three year old Negro boy, and one a Negro man. The fourth slaveholder was, like William Simons fifteen years earlier, a non-householding son of a wealthy man. James Allen died in the spring of 1712 leaving:

a parcell of english goods	44	10	--
a parcell of waring clothes	7	--	--
a young horse an old bridle & sadle	3	3	--
an old silver headed cane	--	7	6
three negroes viz			
Cockey Tom & Lucas	45	--	--
	£101	--	6 ¹²

Aside from their ownership of labor, Surry's better sort differed from their poorer neighbors chiefly in the

¹¹ J. Leitch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew: The Tragic Story of the American Indians in the Old South, (New York: The Free Press, 1981), pp.252-3. On the Indian slave trade, see also: Wright, chapter 6; Verner W. Crane, The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732, (1928; New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1981); and Gary B. Nash, Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), pp.112-1.

¹² Book 6, 1709-15, p.126. Two of the slaves, Tom and Lucas, had been bequeathed to him by his father in a will written in 1710. The third slave mentioned in the will, Joyce wife to Harry, does not appear in James' inventory, nor does his father's will mention a slave named Cockey.

quantity and variety of their possessions. No one in the upper middle 30% was without livestock, for example, while 17% of their neighbors in the bottom 30% had no livestock of any kind. For the upper middle 30%, livestock accounted for 30-60% of the value of their estates. Their herds and flocks tended to be larger than their neighbors'. More than half of their inventories listed cattle herds of sixteen or more while half of the middling sort had herds of ten or fewer. Twenty-six percent of the upper middle 30% had herds of more than forty swine while only 5% of the lower middle 30% did. All but three of the upper middle 30% had horses while sixteen of the middling sort had none. Of those of Surry's better sort who had horses half had more than three (only seven of the middling sort had more than three) and two had more than five. Sheep were not widely kept, but there were slightly more people in the upper middle 30% who had them than did their poorer neighbors and their flocks tended to be slightly larger.

Draft animals appeared for the first time in these inventories, but in only three of them. Nevertheless it is clear that the better sort were using their horses and cattle for traction as well as riding. Plows appeared in two of the inventories, both after 1700, and harrows in 23% of them. Harnesses, yokes and collars, and carts and wheels were found in 34% of the estates. Two thirds of the inventories listed saddles.

Seven percent of the inventories specified troopers saddles; that, combined with the 10% which listed carbines, 20% with pistols and 31% with swords, makes clear that this sector of society provided the bulk of the mounted militia and thus many of its officers. There was no difference between the upper middle 30% and the lower middle 30% in the ownership of guns, but nearly three times as many inventories of the better sort had powder and shot.

Hoes, axes and cooper's tools were about as common for this group as they were for the middling sort. Boats and canoes were less common, appearing only three times. More than half of the individuals of this group had builder's or carpenter's tools, compared to 28% of the middling sort.

Spinning wheels were more common in these households than in those of their poorer neighbors. While only 32% of the bottom 30% and half of the middling sort had spinning wheels, 62% of this group had them. They also tended to have more wheels per house than did their neighbors. About as many had two wheels as had one and by the period 1710-15, five households had three or four. Looms were still rare; only three inventories listed them. Cotton gins appeared just twice, both times in 1710-15.

The better sort had more beds, generally, than did their poorer neighbors, indicating either larger households or more privacy. While the inventories included cattail and flock beds, 67% mentioned at least one feather bed and 48%

mentioned bedsteads. Fifteen percent listed curtains and valances.

It is chiefly in the other household goods that the affluence of this section of society is evident. Furniture specifically designed for seating, chairs and benches, become more frequent as the social scale is climbed. While only 13% of the bottom 30% and 22% of the lower middle 30% had chairs in their inventories, 57% of the better sort had them; seventy-four percent of the inventories of Surry's wealthy decedents listed chairs. Twice as many inventories in the upper middle 30% mentioned forms (benches) as did the lower middle 30%. Interior lighting was more common as well; forty-three percent of the inventories listed candlesticks, while only 18% of the middling sort's inventories did. Lanterns had appeared in only two inventories of the lower middle 30%; they were present in seven of the upper middle 30%'s inventories.

The better sort's hearths were better furnished as well. Andirons, or fire dogs, which had appeared in only two inventories of their poorer neighbors, were found in 20% of these inventories. Fire tongs and shovels were listed for more than a third of the households. Spits, pothooks, and pot-racks which had been listed in slightly more than half of the inventories of the lower middle 30%, were mentioned in 72% of the more affluent inventories. Brass and copper pots, pans and kettles were more common as well.

The appraisers found brass pots and pans in 54% of the affluent households.

Pewter was common, found in 90% of the inventories. Earthenware, which listed in about a quarter of their poorer neighbors' inventories, was found in almost half of these households.

Although the appraisers listed spices in only three inventories, spice mortars and spice boxes were found in 26% of the households (the same percentage as the top 10% of the inventories). Only 5% of their poorer neighbors had spice mortars.

Food processing equipment, although not very frequent, was more common in the inventories of the affluent than those of their poorer neighbors. Mortars and pestles for grinding corn were found in a quarter of the households and grindstones in 30% (mortars were about as common with the middling sort but grindstones had been listed in only 7% of the lower middle 30%'s inventories). Milk trays, pans and cheese and butter making gear were slightly more common but cider and beer casks were listed two and a half times as often. Powdering tubs for salting down meat appeared in 11% of the inventories; they had appeared only twice in the inventories of the lower 60%.

The relative affluence of the upper middle 30% is evident in luxury goods as well. Thirty-six percent of their inventories mentioned extra bed or table linen,

compared to 10% of the middling sort's. Box irons and heaters, or smoothing irons were found in 43% of the inventories and chamber pots in 20% (30% and 7% respectively for the middling sort). That ambiguous term, looking glass was found in 39% of the inventories, more than twice as often as for the lower middle 30%. Razors appeared in 21% of the inventories, twice as often as for the middling sort and three times as often as for the poorer sort. Warming pans, certainly a luxury in the mild-wintered Tidewater, were found in 31% of the affluent households. Items of silver were found in ten inventories and gold in four. One luxury item none of the inventories mentioned was forks.

The people in the upper middle 30% were better read than their poorer neighbors; at least more of them had books. Forty-four percent of the inventories listed books. Half of them had an unspecified number, a "parcell." Of those whose inventories listed the number of books, none had more than six. Again, books were not listed by title or type, except for the seven inventories which noted Bibles and the one which listed a religious work, "a book caled ye wole duty of man."¹³ Apparently, any local magistrates in this group of people either did not have law books, or the appraisers did not distinguish between legal works and other books.

The inventories of the upper middle 30% resembled

¹³ Book 5, 1694-1709, p.292.

those of the middling sort in the matter of raw materials, groceries, and supplies. Food stuffs, like corn, salt, peas and beans and bacon appeared about as often, and never in more than 20% of the inventories. Wheat and spices were the two food items which were found more often in the inventories, and presumably the diets, of the affluent. Wheat appears in 16% of the inventories, compared to 5% of the lower middle 30%. Spices occur in 5% and are not mentioned in the middling sort's inventories at all. Stores of fresh and dried meat, including bacon, are mentioned in fewer of the upper middle 30%'s inventories than the middling sort's, 10% compared to 18%. In addition there are occasional occurrences of such diverse items as molasses, cheese and butter, oil, oats, dried apples and pears, cider, and barley.

Raw materials like tallow and beeswax, feathers, and fabric occur more frequently in the inventories of the affluent. Tallow and beeswax appear in 10% of the inventories and are mentioned only three times in the inventories of the poorer folk. Feathers are mentioned in 18% and fabric and sewing notions in 16% (8% and 5%, respectively, for the middling sort). Homespun, or "virginia cloth," occurs in 11% of the inventories, which is more than twice as often as for the lower middle 30%. Supplies of unspun cotton, wool, and flax however were about as common for both the middling sort and the better sort.

Leather, hides, nails and timber occur about as often as well. Deerskins and pelts are mentioned in only two inventories of the upper middle 30%, while they occur in 13% of the middling sort's inventories. Soap occurs only twice in all the 221 inventories, both times in the upper middle 30%.

The affluence of the upper middle 30% is indicated by the presence in the inventories of tobacco, the basis of wealth in the Chesapeake. Thirty-eight percent of their inventories had tobacco, while only 13% of the lower middle 30% and 15% of the bottom 30% did.

The evidence of the inventories suggests that the people in the upper middle 30% were better insulated from the changing economic conditions than were their poorer neighbors. The mean value of their estates was certainly higher in the decade of 1700-09, but throughout the whole period there was little variation in what was owned. As a group, their herds of cattle, swine and horses were as large in the decade 1690-99 as in 1700-09 or 1710-15. Tools and guns, pewter and brass, beds, books, and tobacco-- all were as common in the nineties as in the more prosperous decade that followed. Where the inventories of the 1700-09 period differ is in some of the luxury goods. Linens, looking glasses, candlesticks and chairs were more likely to appear in these inventories than in those of either period before or after.

A typical Surry county resident in the upper middle 30% was a householder who probably owned his own land.¹⁴ He worked that land with the help of his wife and children, but without the help of either servants or slaves. His cattle herd numbered around twenty and he had perhaps as many swine ranging in the woods near his home. He didn't keep sheep, although a few of his neighbors did. He had a few horses, maybe as many as five, some of which he harnessed to a cart or used to work his fields. Judging from his tools, he perhaps was an artisan: a smith, a cooper, a tanner or a joiner, but most likely he had the skills, as well as the tools, of a carpenter and builder. But his primary occupation was the growth of tobacco and corn, which he cultivated with several types of hoes.

This typical planter had a gun or two and served in the militia as an officer. Status and wealth are intimately connected and this planter's home reflected his position in society. He had several feather beds, perhaps another of flock, and a couple of bedsteads. The beds probably did not have curtains around them, but he did have extra linen. His hall had a table, a few chests, a cupboard perhaps, a spinning wheel or two, and maybe half a dozen chairs. He may not have had andirons on the hearth, but otherwise he was well furnished with fireplace equipment. The kitchen

¹⁴ Of the people who died after 1705, 47% had been on the quitrent roll for 1704. Their holdings ranged from 50-1160 acres, with a mean of 364. Boddie, pp.213-15.

area was well stocked with pots and kettles (a few of them brass), utensils, and perhaps a spice mortar. His table was set with pewter and earthenware plates, porringers, and bowls but he had no table forks.

The appraisers who inventoried his estate made note of an iron for ironing his clothes (which were not many), a few books, and maybe a looking glass and a warming pan but they probably did not pay any attention to the gear in the outbuildings which was necessary for the life he led: the powdering tubs and milk trays, the cider barrel, barrels and casks for tobacco and corn, and the mortar for grinding the corn. They may have enumerated the perishable goods and raw materials he had but most probably the only things they thought worth mentioning were the tobacco and corn.

Chapter V

Surry's Wealthy: The Top Ten Percent

There were twenty-three people who died with estates in the top 10%. Inventories of the personal estates of the seven who died in the period 1690-99 ranged in value from £164-6-11 to £423-19-1 with a mean of £304. Of the eight individuals who died in the following decade, the values ranged from £185-19-0 to £858-18-10 with a mean of £377. If the wealthiest are left out, the remaining six have a mean of about £297. There were eight people in this category who died in the period 1710-15. Their inventories ranged from £115-19-4 to £838-3-6 with a mean of £310. If the two wealthiest are left out, the mean is about £171.

These men and women were landowners. Of the eleven who died after 1705, eight of them (72%) had been on the quitrent roll of 1704. Their holdings had ranged in that year from 200 to 6780 acres, with an average of 1681 acres. The three who did not, John Flood, John Cooke and John Hartwell, all died more than seven years after the 1704 roll was compiled and may not have been of age at that time. There were two Floods, a Cook and a Cocke paying quitrents in 1704.¹

¹ Hartwell's will indicates that he had only one child and she was underage, so perhaps he died young and was not a land-holding adult himself in 1704. Surry County, Deeds,

In comparison to the landholdings of the wealthy, of those who died after 1705, only 47% of the upper middle 30%, 32-41% of the lower middle 30% and 24% of the bottom 30% were on the quitrent roll of 1704. The upper middle 30%'s landholdings ranged from 50 to 1160 acres with a mean of 364. The lower middle 30%'s holdings ranged from 60 to 1400 acres with a mean of 280 acres, or if the largest is left out, 195 acres. Only seven of the bottom 30% were on the rolls as landowners in 1704 but their holdings ranged from 150 to 1000 acres with a mean of 341 acres, or if the largest is left out, 231 acres.²

Aside from the matter of land ownership, Surry's wealthy differ from their affluent neighbors chiefly in their possession of labor; at least nineteen of the twenty-three owned slaves (none owned servants). In fact, the number of slave owners may have been higher. One of the nineteen, Mr. John Hartwell, left a will listing twelve slaves but his inventory listed none.³

The one person who died in the period 1690-99 without slaves was Roger Delk. He died in his early seventies in the late summer of 1693 leaving an estate worth £164-6-11. He was, or had been, a land owner, having obtained a patent

Wills, etc., Book 6, 1709-1715, pp.71-72, 76, 184-85, 203-204; Boddie, pp.213-15.

² Boddie, pp. 213-215.

³ Book 6, 1709-15, pp.184-5, pp.203-4.

for 100 acres in 1663. In 1674 he appeared on the list of tithables for two, himself and one other: either male kin, partner or servant. By 1683 he no longer had that help and was listed singly.⁴ The other three people whose inventories were without slaves all died in the period 1710-15. John Cooke's estate was £117-5-0, which was near the bottom of the range for this category, but the other two, William Hunt and Edward Morland were close to the mean obtained by omitting the very wealthiest. Their estates were valued at £162-1-0 and £184-14-7 respectively.⁵ Although Cooke was not on the 1704 quitrent roll, the other two were. Morland, in 1704 paid quitrents on 225 acres. There were two William Hunts on the rolls, one for 4042 acres and the other for 696 acres; which was the man who died in June of 1711 it is impossible to tell.⁶

On the basis of the inventories, the numbers of slaves each slaveholder owned was not large. Forty-seven percent had three to five and 32%, six to ten. The inventories do not show anyone owning ten to twenty; Hartwell's twelve slaves appeared only in his will. Only one inventory, that of Lt. Col. William Browne, mentioned more than twenty slaves. Browne's inventory, the wealthiest one in the entire twenty-six year period, was taken July 2, 1703 and listed:

⁴ Book 4, 1687-94, p.325; Boddie, pp.175, 183, 186.

⁵ Book 6, 1709-1715, pp.71-2, 79-82, 196-8.

⁶ Boddie, pp.213-15.

	£	s	d
six negro men Dick Will John Tom			
Roger & Will at 30L each	180	--	--
ffrank a man & Mary a woman being old	20	--	--
Edmond a boy & ffra: a woman	58	--	--
Sarah Sue & Cate girles	75	--	--
Jenny Betty Dick & Moll children	52	--	--

In addition, the appraisers noted but assigned no value to: "Ann a negro girle Daingerous sick Tom Jack & Cate very old". Thus Browne's effective labor force appears to have been thirteen. His slaves represented 45% of the appraised value of his estate.⁷

Only Major Arthur Allen, who had the second largest inventory, appears to have had more slaves than William Browne. Although Allen's inventory mentions only two, his will lists an additional twenty-nine.⁸

Slaves represented a considerable investment of capital. One of William Browne's field hands at £30 represented the cost of a small herd of cattle, or about eight horses, or about three and a half times the amount of tobacco a single worker could produce in a year's time. For more than half of these wealthy slaveowners, slaves represented between 31 and 50% of their inventoried wealth.

Livestock, which was where most of Surry's residents put most of their disposable wealth, was not as important for the wealthy. In three quarters of their inventories

⁷ Book 5, 1694-1709, p.341.

⁸ Book 6, 1709-1715, pp.84-88, 33-35.

livestock made up 40% or less of the total value. On the other hand, for 70% of the upper middle 30% and for 85% of the middling and poorer sorts stock represented more than 40% of their estates.

The size of the herds that the wealthy owned was of course much larger than those of their neighbors. Two had cattle herds numbering in the eighties and nineties, two had herds in the fifties, two in the forties, and ten (43%) had between 21-30 cattle. In contrast, only a tenth of the affluent upper middle 30% had cattle herds in excess of thirty and a quarter of them had herds of 21-30. The size of swine herds was comparable. Sixty-one percent of the wealthy owned more than forty pigs, barrows, shoats and hogs; only 26% of their affluent neighbors owned more than forty.

While only two individuals in the upper middle 30% had owned more than five horses, 35% of the wealthy did. One had nineteen, one twelve, and the rest between six and nine. Forty-eight percent of them owned between three and five.

The wealthy were much more likely to keep sheep than their neighbors. Eighty-three of them did so, in comparison to 39% of the upper middle 30%. Of those who kept sheep, nine (39%) had flocks of more than twenty-five. Among their neighbors, most of those who kept sheep had less than ten.

Four of the inventories (17%) mentioned draft animals. Like their affluent neighbors, they were using animals for

traction on their plantations. Although plows were not mentioned, harrows were listed in 35% of the inventories, harnesses and yokes in 57%, and carts in 65%, the latter close to twice the occurrence in the inventories of the well-to-do.

The inventories also list saddles; most significant perhaps is the mention of women's saddles in 39% of them. Sidesaddles and pillions were listed in only two of the inventories of the upper middle 30%. This certainly suggests a greater degree of mobility and freedom for women of wealthy families than known by their poorer neighbors. A traveler visiting Virginia in 1732 noted: "Tho they have good horses, the Gentlewomen seldom ride but uses Chasse Chariots or Coaches."⁹ That may have been true in Yorktown, Williamsburg and on the Mattaponi River where he visited, but no one in Surry County listed any vehicle in their inventory other than a cart and wheels.

With regard to other tools, the inventories of the top 10% resembled those of the upper middle 30%. Surry's wealthy tended to have slightly more of most of the tools their well-to-do neighbors had. Only in boats, shoemaker's tools and spinning wheels did they have a significantly greater number. Twenty-six percent of the inventories of the wealthy listed boats, which was five times as often as

⁹ William Hugh Grove, "Virginia in 1732: The Travel Journal of William Hugh Grove", Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 85 (1977):30.

for the upper middle 30% and bottom 30% and twice that of the lower middle 30%. Only four inventories in the bottom 90% mentioned shoemaker's tools but 17% of the top 10% had them. Eighty-seven percent of the rich households had spinning wheels, compared to 62% of the upper middle 30%-- a not surprising fact given the number of sheep being raised by the wealthy.

More of the wealthy had guns, pistols, carbines, swords and supplies of powder and shot than their neighbors did. Eighty-three percent of them had guns and 43% had swords, compared to 61% and 31% of the upper middle 30%. Extra stores of powder and shot were noted by the appraisers in 22% of the wealthy households and in only 13% of the well-to-do.

A greater number of the inventories of the top 10% contained other supplies, such as raw materials and perishable goods. Twice as many listed nails, timber, leather, cotton, wool, and fabric (homespun more than three times) than did the inventories of the upper middle 30%. Stores of salt, corn and wheat were also found in twice as many inventories and meat and spices were listed in almost three times as many. Tobacco was listed in 52% of the inventories, compared to 38% for the upper middle 30%.

Household goods, and especially luxury goods, also reveal the difference between the affluent and the wealthy. They owned much the same sort of things but the wealthy

tended to have more of everything. Sixty-one percent of them had more than four beds while only 8% of the affluent had more than four. Seventy percent of the inventories listed bedsteads and 47% curtains and valances for the beds; only 47% of the inventories of the upper middle 30% mentioned bedsteads and 15%, bed curtains.¹⁰ Three quarters of the wealthy households had chairs while just over half of their affluent neighbors had them. Among the upper middle 30%, those who had chairs were likely to have between six and ten; the wealthy were more likely to have fifteen or more.

Other notable differences were in the matter of lighting, fireplace equipment, kitchen ware and linen. Sixty-five percent of the inventories list candlesticks, while less than half of the upper middle 30%'s inventories did. Andirons occur in 57% of the wealthy's inventories but in only 20% of their well-to-do neighbors'; spits, pothooks and pot-racks were more common as well. Brass pots, pans and kettles appeared in close to three quarters of the inventories of the wealthy but were present in only slightly more than half of the affluent households. Copper was also more common. Mortars and pestles were mentioned in twice as many inventories. Bed and table linens were found in 83% of

¹⁰ Grove said of the gentry: "They tell You they wash their Bed Curtains once a fortnight, But the truth is they seldom use any in Summer nor Testers or Head boards because of the Chintzes or Buggs which are plenty." Grove, p.22-23.

the inventories of the wealthy, compared to 36% of the upper middle 30%.

Half of the inventories of the wealthy mentioned items of silver, compared to only 16% of their affluent neighbors. Thirteen percent of the wealthy listed case knives and forks in their inventories; only three inventories in the lower 90% had tableware. Seventy-eight percent of them had looking glasses and 56% of them warming pans, compared to 39% and 31% respectively for the affluent.

Books were listed in 74% of the inventories, a significant increase over the 44% for the affluent. Like the inventories of their book-owning neighbors, most of them listed just "a parcell" of books. A quarter of them listed five or less but two individuals had a substantial number. One had twenty-five and John Thompson had a library of 280 books.¹¹ One inventory mentioned legal works, but only Bibles and prayer books were listed by title.

Aside from their ownership of land and labor, the wealthy differed from their neighbors chiefly in the comfort, and indeed luxury, with which their houses were furnished. John Thompson's inventory of June 8, 1700 is a good example.¹² After listing the livestock at the home

¹¹ Book 5, 1694-1709, pp.213-14.

¹² Book 5, 1694-1709, pp.213-14.

house and at two neighbors,¹³, and the stock, tools and household goods at the slaves' quarter, the inventory turns to the main house, beginning with the second floor:

in the south chamber	
to 1 feather bed & furniture	1100
to 1 feather bed & bolster rugg blankett & sheete	0800
to 1 chest of drawers & small table & 2 standes & 1 small chest	0800
to 280 bookes great and small	0300
to 1 pre of andirons 15 indian hatchets & 1 old iron wedge 1 little froe 500 6 ^d nails	0200
to 1 great leather chaire w th armes 1 wainscutt chaire 2 leather	0170
to 28 napkins 4 table cloathes 2 towells all diaper	0300
in middle chamber	
to 2 chests 1 closettoole 2 pr of stilliyards & 2 bushells 1 pad 1 old sadle 15 childrens flannell wastcoates	0380
in the north chamber	
to 2 feather beds 1 bolster 2 blanketts 2 sheetes & 1 rugg	1500
to 1 old suite of curtains & vallens 1 old cupboard 4 weeding hoes 2 falling axes 2 leather chaires 1 spade 2 bedsteads	0360 ¹⁴

The Thompson household was unusual in having as many books

¹³ Thompson had two cows and calves, one heifer and one yearling at George Blow's and four cows, two calves, one bull and two yearlings at Samuell Cooke's. Three of the inventories listed stock at neighbors' places, but whether these were recent purchases, rent or payment for debts, or simply being cared for by tenants is not evident. Arthur Allen's inventory listed stock and some tools at six different neighbors. Some of the stock at Darby Bohoon's and at Richard Athisson's he owned in partnership with the two men. Thomas Blunt, who was a merchant as well as a planter, had livestock, tools and household goods at George Blow's and at Jno. Green's. Book 6, 1709-15, pp.4-5, 84-88.

¹⁴ A froe is a knife type wedge used for splitting shingles, staves, and clapboards; a close-stool is a chamber pot enclosed in a chair or box; diaper is a type of linen fabric with a woven pattern; a stilliard, or steelyard, is a type of balance scale; a rug is a heavy blanket not a floor covering. OED, s.v.

as it did, and in having a close-stool, but not in keeping tools like froes and hoes in the chambers. Rather than being a specialized room for sleeping, the chamber was more of an all-purpose room. The south chamber with its two rather expensive beds, books and the "great leather chaire" was a rather fine room, for it had a fireplace. Neither of the other chambers apparently did.

After having noted some things in the "cock loft", or attic, ("to old spinning wheeles & a pcell of old iron & some old lumber"), the appraisers turned to the main floor of the house:

in the boarded room	
to 1 feather bed bolster & pillows & bedstead	
& blanketts & sheets & rugg	1200
to a pre of andirons	0200
to 2 tables 3 trunks 1 desk 1 chest 1 cupboard	
& 6 chaires	0670
middle roome	
to 1 table 5 leather chaires 1 old couch 1	
old gun	0310
in the kitchen	
to 92 ¹ / ₂ of pewter dishes old & new	0460
to 96 ¹ / ₂ of plates	0131
to 23 ¹ / ₂ of hollow pewter	0110
to brass mortar & pestle 4 brass candlesticks	
& pre of snuffers	0120
to 1 brass kettle 2 brass skillets & 1 brass	
basting ladle	0200
to 1 pcell of iron ware	0510

Some of what follows immediately in the inventory does not look, from sheer bulk, as though it would fit in the kitchen:

to 1 negroe bed & a pcell of lumber & some	
small trifles	0270
to 1 looking glass & some more trifles	0070
to 25 small bushells of salt	1500
to 30 bush: of wheate	1050

to 19 barrells of corne	1500
to a pcell of old caske	0180
to 1 old boate & saile	0200
to some more old cask & 2 baggs 2 bread trays	
1 spitt & some old tubbs	0150
to 5 pr of new shoes	0150

Thompson was a wealthy man; his estate was appraised at £384-18-7 and he owned five slaves-- four adults and one child. He was a leader in Surry society and appeared on the larger colony-wide scene as well. He was a Burgess in 1693, 1695-96, and 1697.¹⁵

Thompson's house was an unusual one, being two and a half stories with three rooms on each floor. The more typical wealthy person's house in Virginia was the two-cell hall-parlor house, a house of two rooms on each floor. Indeed, Dell Upton has pointed out that "these one- and two-cell houses accounted for almost six out of every seven dwellings of the colony's most substantial planters."¹⁶ The small number of rooms was not just a matter of economics but also of choice. There was an increasing tendency to isolate working spaces, housing servants and their work functions in separate buildings. Having rejected the servant or slave as a legitimate participant in family life, the moderately

¹⁵ Boddie, p.166.

¹⁶ Dell Thayer Upton, Early Vernacular Architecture in Southeastern Virginia, (Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 1979), p.233.

wealthy planter did not need a large house.¹⁷ It was these modest-sized houses and all their dependencies that gave the appearance of little villages to the countryside which so many travelers commented on.

Most of Surry's residents lived in single story houses of one or two rooms. These were well built wooden frame houses covered with unpainted clapboard and most often about eighteen feet deep. Chimneys were of wood, or occasionally brick, and set in the gable ends. The principle room, the hall, was usually square; if there was a parlor, or chamber, it ranged from half to the full width of the hall. Passages, a generally late development, were nine to eleven feet wide. Interiors had exposed beams which might be painted, whitewashed ceilings and lath and plaster walls. If there was wainscotting, it was usually on the chimney wall. The hall tended to be the most decorated of the rooms.

Most of the houses were earthfast, that is, with foundation timbers set directly into the ground. Such foundations were of course perishable, but, depending on the

¹⁷ Upton, pp.152-172. He argues that this exclusion of social inferiors from the house, and the creation of structures of separation and control, like porches, entries and passages, was a response to a time of considerable social tension; "Despite the familiarity in the public arena which developed in the half century after Bacon's Rebellion, the houses of Virginia's planters suggest that their private uneasiness never disappeared. As a result, the larger planters rigidly restructured their own personal worlds." P.216.

kind of wood used and on the size of the timbers, the earthfast foundation could usually last a decade or more without repair. Impermanent foundations should not, however suggest slipshod or shabby buildings. These were well-crafted, substantial dwellings. "Post buildings," Upton says, "were all the poor could afford, but richer men chose to build them because while they were cheaper they were at the same time acceptable for all Virginians."¹⁸

The dependencies which surrounded these houses included kitchens, dairy or milk houses, smokehouses, granaries, barns and tobacco houses, cellars (not necessarily underground) and store houses.¹⁹

The store houses found on the plantations of the wealthy were important for the rest of the population as well. Wealthy planters who sold their tobacco crops directly to London and Bristol merchants often functioned as local merchants and brokers for their poorer neighbors. They imported more goods than they needed and sold them in the neighborhood.

¹⁸ Upton, p.85. The description of housing is based on Upton; Cary Carson et al., "Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies", Winterthur Portfolio, XVI (1981) 135-196; Cary Carson, "The 'Virginia House' in Maryland", Maryland Historical Magazine, 69:2 (Summer 1974): 185-196; and William M. Kelso, Kingsmill Plantations, 1619-1800: Archaeology of Country Life in Colonial Virginia, (New York: Academic Press, 1984). It wasn't until the last quarter of the 18th century that earthfast houses began to be replaced by houses with permanent foundations in this section of Virginia. Upton, p.369.

¹⁹ Grove, p.26; Kelso, p.131.

Two of Surry's local merchants were Robert Ruffin and Thomas Blunt. Ruffin died in the fall of 1693, the richest man that died in the decade. He was a considerable land holder; his widow in 1704 paid quitrents on 3001 acres. His eight slaves made up about half of his total worth, but he had about as much of his estate tied up in the goods in his store as he did in livestock.²⁰ His inventory listed "in ye store":

8 hair sifters & a pcell of shott & powder	00450
a pcell of nailes 7 iron candlesticks 1 nar: ax	
23 nar: hoes 2 pr duftailes 1 pr hookes & hinges	
& a pcell womens hookes & eyes	00600
80 doz of gimp buttons, a pcell of damnified	
gloves horne combs & other small psells of	
haberdashery	00700
10 pr irish hose 6 pr mens yarne 18 pr of boys	
ditto & 13 pr childrens ditto	00400
2 pr girles ticking bodice 1 pr paragon sleeves	
1/2 doz latches & furniture 3 pr markeing irons	
2 pr scales & wts & 4 bushells of salt	00350
3 old sadles & 1 bridle a pcell feathers & oats	00500
67 ounces & 1/2 of plate averdupoize w 2 yds	
scarlett bro:cloath 4 yds virg.cloath & 24 yds	
of stuff	038??
6 pr sheetes 4 table cloaths 24 napkins 6	
pillowbeers & 6 towells	00500
weareing apparrell a pcell of fflax a hatchell	
& 3 pr old woll cards & a pcell of wooll & yarne	
& 8 yds shalloone	01360 ²¹

Elsewhere in the inventory the appraisers listed "a pcell of

²⁰ Boddie, p.214; Book 4, 1687-94, pp.349-50.

²¹ The meaning of dufftails here is uncertain; it could pertain to tools used to produce dovetail joints, or to dovetail hinges. Gimp is silk, worsted or cotton twist with a cord or wire running through it. Paragon, stuff and shalloon are all names for various kinds of woollen fabric. A pillowbeer is a pillow case and a hatchell, or hackle, is a flax comb used to prepare flax fibers for carding and spinning. OED, s.v.

english goods lately come in amounting to 01000."

Thomas Blunt's inventory taken in April of 1710 listed a much larger collection of things in his store. These goods comprised 24% of his estate, while his livestock accounted for 28% and his ten slaves 32%. In addition to selling tools and European manufactured goods to his neighbors, he was obviously involved in some fashion with trade with Indians; his inventory listed over three hundred deerskins, as well as pelts of otter, beaver, fox, cat, raccoon, and mink. He had "indian boots", "indian combs", trading guns and 1663 1/2 cubits of roanoke, a type of wampum.

These two men were unusual even among the wealthy of Surry. The others may have had enough to oblige a neighbor in need, but none had such large and diverse accumulation of goods to indicate the occupation of a merchant and no other inventories specifically mentioned "store" or "store house".

With their extensive lands, their slaves, their large herds of livestock and their well-furnished houses, Surry's wealthy lived lives that differed from their poorer neighbors not so much in kind as in degree. These were not the great planters of the late eighteenth century with elegant Georgian mansions and large numbers of slaves. Most were not even in the same category as such contemporaries as Robert Carter of the Northern Neck or William Byrd II of Westover just across the James River.

Although the numbers are too small to be anything but suggestive, these twenty-three inventories of Surry's top 10% indicate a growing division between the rich and the very rich. In the period 1690-99, there is no large gap between the wealthiest and the others; if the richest is left out, the mean is still about the same: £307. But in the next decade, there is a jump between most of the inventories and the wealthiest. The values go from £469-1-6 to £858-18-10; if just the latter is omitted, the mean is £232 instead of £377. The following period is the same; the gap here is between £248-3-0 and £754-11-9. Again omitting the two wealthiest, the mean is £171. Even in a relatively poor county like Surry, the foundations of fortunes were being laid for a few and a distance was developing which was not just economic.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

The picture that emerges from these probate inventories confirms the description of Surry as a poor county. Its small wooden houses with gray weathered clapboard, sagging some where foundation timbers need to be replaced, surrounded by gardens and tobacco barns, smokehouses and milk houses, fields with worm fences and woodlands where the stock graze, all this resembles most of the rest of the Chesapeake. It is not until one looks at the list of tithables the sheriff is compiling, or sees the price that the county's tobacco is fetching for the payment of the quitrents, or looks over the shoulder of the appraisers appointed to inventory the estate of one of Surry's residents who has just died, that one sees just how poor Surry is.

Middlesex County on the Middle Peninsula between the York and the Rappahanock Rivers, and six counties in Maryland have been studied using probate records.¹ The contrast between these areas and Surry reveals not only Surry's relative poverty, but also its relative lack of

¹ Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia 1650-1750, (New York; W.W. Norton & Company, 1984); Main, Tobacco Colony.

immense economic differences among its residents. Surry was also in some ways a better place for the poorer and middling planters than was either Middlesex or Maryland.

In Maryland, from 1684 to 1719, the average wealth of the bottom 30% went from £15 to £13 and for the lower middle 30% the averages went from £49 to £42. In Surry, on the other hand the averages for the poorer sort went from £12 in 1690-99 to £22 the following decade to £18 in the years 1710-15. The lower middle 30%'s averages went from £24 to £47 to £39 in the same periods. It is clear that Surry's poorer folks were better off than those in Maryland; they certainly profited from the boom years at the turn of the century. The middling sort did as well; although they were not as rich as their counterparts in Maryland, they too gained economic ground during this period.

Surry's upper middle 30% were considerably poorer than Maryland's. The mean for this group in Surry was £76 to £103 to £74; in Maryland the mean went from £150 to £146 with a peak of £169 in the period 1697-1704.

But the biggest difference is to be seen in the top 10%. The average of the estates of Maryland's wealthy rose steadily from £652 in the period 1684-97 to £1009 in 1713-19. Surry's top 10%, on the other hand, averaged from £304 to £377 to £310. If the wealthiest two or three percent are left out, the others can in this group can be seen to have

lost ground; the averages drop from £304 to £297 to £171.²

Comparable data are not available for Middlesex, but it seems that Surry's poorer folk were better off than the poor in Middlesex as well. One third of the estates there were worth about £9 and in the early decades of the eighteenth century the distance between the poorest and the uppermost had doubled. The surge in prosperity after the turn of the century affected only the top third of the estates in the county.³

In 1701 Middlesex's Ralph Wormeley died leaving an estate of £2,861. He had ten separate farms or quarters, 439 cattle, 86 sheep and 85 black slaves (20% of the county's blacks), two Indian slaves, and eight servants. His main house had ten rooms, with seven fireplaces. His level of wealth and luxury is approached by no one in Surry.⁴

In 1704 in Middlesex, about one fifth of the householders had at least one slave; during the period 1700-09 in Surry only five percent were slaveowners--this even though the percentage of blacks in the population of both counties was approximately the same.⁵

Although Surry was not a rich man's country, the

² Main, Tobacco Colony, p.54.

³ Rutman and Rutman, pp.154, 188.

⁴ Rutman and Rutman, pp.153-54.

⁵ Rutman and Rutman, p.166.

inventories reveal that it was a good place to live for the poor and middling planters. Great wealth was not to be had, but it was a place of opportunity for many. It was, in addition, slow to develop the big gap between the very wealthy and the ordinary planter that was developing elsewhere.

The relative wealth of Surry's poor and middling folk in comparison to other areas may indicate a process other than wider opportunity and the maturation of the economy. Certainly the Atlantic economy was maturing. Shipping in the eighteenth century was expanding in both volume and frequency and the industrial production of cheap consumer goods, like earthenwares, meant that goods simply were more available and cheaper than they had been in the previous century. It has been suggested that as true economic opportunity decreased in Middlesex for the middling and poorer sorts, an increase in consumer goods made just getting by more comfortable and compensated for narrowing circumstances.⁶

However the possession of things is not just a matter of opportunity and wealth, but also a matter of choice. The purchase of an item, particularly of a luxury item, may be a way of proclaiming one's status and asserting oneself over against the elite.

While the prosperity of the years after the turn of

⁶ Rutman and Rutman, p.192.

the century did not affect the frequency with which items appeared in the inventories of the affluent and wealthy, it did in those of the middling and poorer sorts. Household goods, especially beds and for the middling sort, chairs, pewter and brass as well, appear significantly more often in the inventories after 1700. Guns appear more often too and for the bottom 30% swords, which had not been found before 1700, are noted in twelve percent of the inventories in the decade following the turn of the century.

The acquisition of these things can, perhaps, be seen as an assertion of dignity and independence when set in the context of an alteration in the deferential politics and an increasing responsiveness to the electorate on the part of the province's elite.⁷ That this was a subtle challenge to the existing order is supported by Upton's argument that the architecture of the homes of the elite, which restricted and controlled, reflected an uneasiness in the elite lingering from the social upheaval of Bacon's rebellion. Certainly none of the elite were likely to have forgotten that Surry had been one of the focal points of the events of 1676.⁸

Artifacts, such as chairs and brass kettles and swords

⁷ John C. Rainbolt, "The Alteration in the Relationship between Leadership and Constituents in Virginia, 1660 to 1720", William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., 27 (July 1970): 411-34; and Carole Shammas, "English-Born and Creole Elites in Turn-of-the-Century Virginia", in Tate and Ammerman, The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century, pp.274-96.

⁸ Upton, p.216; Morgan, pp.250-270.

and houses, are not just "preserved behavior."⁹ They are symbols as well and are heavy with meaning and what is needed is to

forget that commodities are good for eating, clothing, and shelter; forget their usefulness and try instead the idea that commodities are good for thinking, treat¹⁰ them as a non-verbal medium for human faculty.

What is needed is a complete analysis of Surry's material culture which would reveal something of the symbolic structures of its everyday life.

⁹ The phrase is Robert Schuyler's. Robert L Schuyler, "The Spoken Word, the Written Word, Observed Behavior, and Preserved Behavior: the Contexts Available to the Archaeologist", in Historical Archaeology: A Guide to Substantive and Theoretical Contributions, ed. Robert L. Schuyler, (Farmingdale, N.Y.; Baywood Publishing Company, 1978).

¹⁰ Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood quoted in Linda Wiley Donley, "House Power: Swahili Space and Symbolic Markers", in Ian Hodder, ed., Symbolic and Structural Archaeology, (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.73.

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