

DRINK AND BE MERRY: GLASS VESSELS FROM RUMNEY'S TAVERN (18AN48), LONDON, MARYLAND

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Abstract

As part of its archeological investigations of the colonial period port town of London in Edgewater, Maryland, *The Lost Towns of Anne Arundel Project* located the site of Edward Rumney's Tavern (18AN48). A partial earthen cellar beneath the earthfast structure yielded a large, well-preserved assemblage of ceramic and glass vessels dating to the period ca. 1690-1730s. This paper documents the glass vessels — many mendable — recovered from the east half of the cellar by describing and illustrating table glass, cylindrical and case bottles, and pharmaceutical vials. This extensive glass assemblage suggests an elite tavern that served merchants, wealthy planters, naval officers, and supercargoes — an hypothesis supported by a single period newspaper advertisement.

Introduction

Taverns played an important role in the social and political development of England's North American colonies. These establishments also figure prominently in textbook and museum portrayals of the American past. For example, such 18th-century taverns as Gadsby's in Alexandria, Rawlings's and Shields's in Williamsburg, Virginia, and Reynold's Tavern in Annapolis, Maryland, currently operate both as restaurants and as explicit interpretations of colonial taverns. Open to all, they serve 'Colonial' fare with reproduction ceramic and glass vessels in an atmosphere intended to replicate the colonial tavern experience. Documentary and archeological analyses, however, suggest that such commercial interpretations are incorrect in their depictions of clienteles, at least in towns with more than one tavern.

Several lines of evidence support the contention that Rumney's Tavern served an elite clientele. It was located across the street from the county courthouse, suggesting a prestigious neighborhood. Fine ceramic tablewares recovered from the tavern's partial cellar — consisting primarily of decorated tin-glazed plates, cups, and bowls, but also including Chinese porcelain — indicate that the refuse deposited in the cellar hole during the first third of the 18th century represents elite dining and entertainment (Luckenbach, Dance, and Gryczkowski 1998). Finally, the glass containers include an assortment of beverage-specific drinking

vessels consistent with period depictions and descriptions of elite dining and socializing. Determining whether ceramics and glasswares reflect the wealth and prestige of a tavern's clientele will require well-documented assemblages from contemporary sites. The principal objective of this paper is to document the glass vessel assemblage quantitatively, and through illustrations and vessel descriptions.

Location and Setting of Rumney's Tavern

London, sometimes called London Town, lies on the tip of a northeast trending peninsula on the south bank of the South River, less than 10 miles south of Annapolis, Maryland (Figure 1). Elevations average 20 feet above mean sea level, with steep bluffs defining most of the northern end of the peninsula. The surface is generally level, although cut in numerous areas by drainages and eroded roadways. No springs survive in the area today, probably a result of intensive residential development beginning in the 1920s.

Maryland's General Assembly established London in 1683. The specific act, "An Act for the Encouragement of Trade," appointed commissioners from among each county's planters to appropriate 100-acre tracts, and plat, and sell lots. All of these towns were laid out in simple grids consisting of streets and numbered lots. Regularity in layout depended on topography. The town commissioners reserved large lots in each platted town for markets, churches, and other public buildings (Reps 1972; Thomas 1997). The legislature charged the commissioners with lot sales and with enforcing the principal stipulation for purchase of a lot: the purchaser had to erect a 400-square-foot building within two years of passage of the act. Subsequent laws stipulated construction within six months of lot purchase. Failure to meet this requirement could result in lot forfeiture, at least one instance of which is documented in the land records (Anne Arundel Land Records [AALR], CW#1:227, ca. 1706).

London served as the seat of county government for a decade preceding the move of the courthouse to Annapolis in 1695 (Maryland State Archives [MSA] XIX:265), and was once considered as the site for the colony's capital. Lot sales, however, remained slow until the first decade of the 18th century. By the 1720s, London had become an important port and link on the road between Williamsburg and Philadelphia,

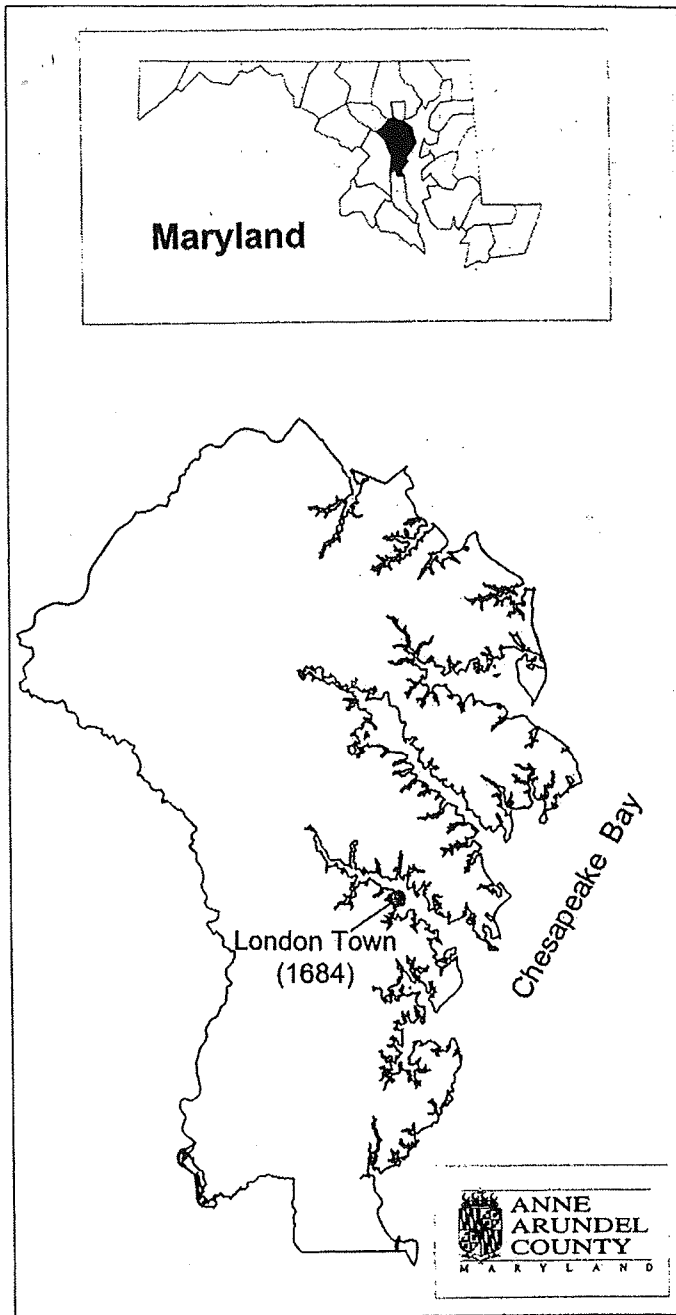


FIGURE 1. Site location map.

via Annapolis. Merchant ships probably anchored in the middle of the river, sending shallops or lighters into port and out to the plantations to collect tobacco and deliver manufactured goods. Trade and the resident population supported a variety of maritime and domestic crafts, including: ship and small craft building, ropemaking (Moser 1998), carpentry and joinery, wigmaking, and tailoring (Moser et al. 1997; Shomette 1978).

Despite a promising beginning, London's growth faltered and then declined during the second half of the 18th century. In 1747, Maryland's General Assembly enacted a law designating a number of tobacco inspection warehouses around the Chesapeake Bay. This law prohibited the shipment of tobacco, the colony's principal export, from any place other than one of the designated warehouses. London, for reasons that remain unclear, was not listed in the act. Beard's Point, a peninsula upriver, became the site of the official inspection warehouse. Its proximity to London, and several ferry operations that were part of the great north-south intercolonial road, supported the town for several more decades. By the end of Revolutionary War, however, only a ferry and several buildings remained: the loss of trade, compounded by the depression in the aftermath of the war, led to London's abandonment. The lots were consolidated into three small farms. A 10-acre tract and the William Brown house — a 1760 Palladian-style brick mansion — served as the county almshouse from the 1820s until passage of the Welfare Act in 1965. The almshouse parcel became a county park in the 1970s, enlarged with an additional 13 acres in 1984.

In November 1709, the county court granted shipwright and ferryman Edward Rumney a license to operate a tavern in London (Anne Arundel Court Judgments [hereinafter AACJ] 92). Land records place Rumney at London as early as the 1690s where he may have worked as both boatbuilder and tavernkeeper. In 1711, Rumney mortgaged his real and personal property, probably including the tavern and Lot 87, to Charles Carroll of Annapolis (AALR PK:375). He repaired and improved the dwelling *cum* tavern in 1712, petitioning at the time for a ferry license. Rumney appears in the 1715 county court records as the South River ferrymaster and innkeeper. He overextended himself financially, a common occurrence in the credit economy of the day. Charles Carroll of Annapolis foreclosed on the mortgage by October 1720, leasing lot and tavern to Stephen West, Sr. (AALR CW#1:268). West purchased the tavern in September 1723 (AALR RCW#2:219), probably operating it until his death in 1752 (*Maryland Gazette*, January 9, 1752). Carpenter and joiner William Brown occupied West's tavern in 1753 (*Maryland Gazette*, October 9, 1753), possibly moving the operation to his new brick dwelling sometime after 1760.

Brown advertised the opening of his establishment in 1753:

Notice is hereby given, That the subscriber, now living in the house, at London Town

where Mr. West Deceased formerly dwelt[,] has provided himself with good boats and skilful hands, as also with good beds, liquors and provender for horses. All *Gentlemen* who think fit to favor him with their custom may depend on a Quick passage over the ferry, good entertainment, and civil usage from
 Their Humble Servant
 William Brown
 (*Maryland Gazette*, October 18, 1753,
 italics added)

The documentary record is unclear as to whether the West tavern occupied by Brown was the same structure built by Rumney more than a half century earlier.

Archeological Excavations at Rumney's Tavern

The Lost Towns Project of Anne Arundel Project began excavations on Lot 87 in the spring of 1996. Preliminary archival research suggested that Edward Rumney and his successors, Stephen West, Sr., and William Brown, operated a tavern on Lot 87, overlooking Scott Street to the east and the South River to the north. Archeological testing by Wesler (1982), Barse (1986), and Read (in Moser et al. 1997) yielded sherds of Queensware, or creamware, and Westerwald,

English Brown, and white salt-glazed stonewares — all typical wares of the 18th century. Each of the investigators also found significant numbers of 19th- and 20th-century ceramic wares and other artifacts reflecting the continued occupation of the site, primarily by the staff and inmates of the county almshouse. Extensive excavations by *The Lost Towns Project* in 1996 and 1997 yielded essentially the same materials, albeit in greater numbers. The large block excavations, however, revealed something that the small, widely scattered test units could not expose: a plethora of post-holes and postmolds demarcating part of Rumney's Tavern, and a partial, trash-filled earthen cellar hole beneath one end of the building (Figure 2). The site presented an opportunity to study a tavern building and its contents, and to examine an important aspect of colonial social, economic, and political life.

The project team excavated the northeast and southeast quadrants of the cellar hole. Both quadrants yielded a rich array of glasswares, as well as ceramics and other artifacts, primarily from two trash deposits separated by lenses of silt (Figure 3). The glassware assemblage includes bottles, drinking glasses, pharmaceutical vials, a perfume bottle, and mirror glass.

Glass Analysis

Method

Glass vessels from the cellar hole, without exception, were broken, indicating that they were discarded rather than abandoned. All of the glass was sorted into vessel forms (e.g., cylindrical bottles, case bottles, flasks, wine glasses) and then sorted into minimum numbers of vessels based on rims or bases, depending upon which was more numerous for a particular vessel form. Unique rim and base forms, or rims and bases with more than 50% of their circumferences intact, constituted individual vessels for each form. The glass assemblage from the east half of the cellar produced a minimum of: 44 beverage bottles; 18 drinking glasses; 11 pharmaceutical bottles; a scent, or perfume, bottle; and fragments of a 'looking glass,' or mirror. Table 1 lists the vessel forms and their absolute and relative representations.

Beverage Bottles

The project team recovered 44 fragmentary beverage bottles from the east half of Rumney's cellar. Prior to identifying individual vessels, the laboratory staff mended the glass sherds, reconstructing 50% or more of 11 beverage bottles (Figure 4). The remaining

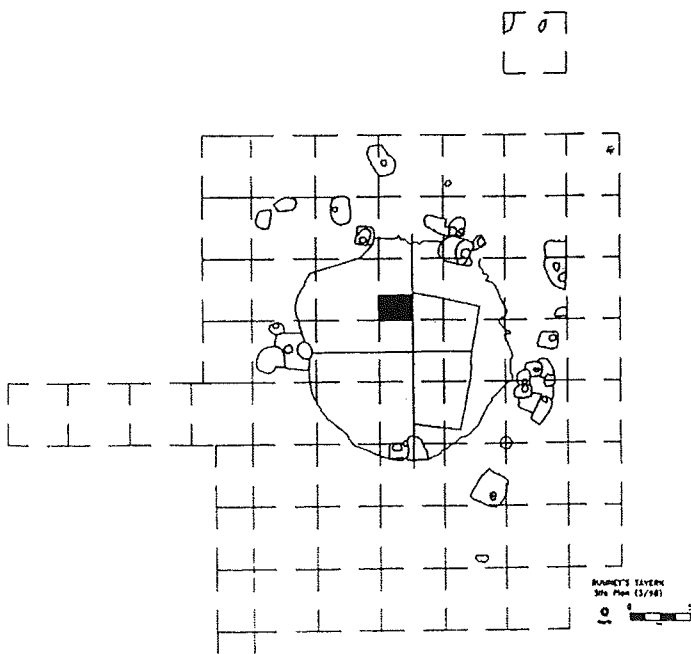


FIGURE 2. Planview of Rumney's Tavern site excavations.

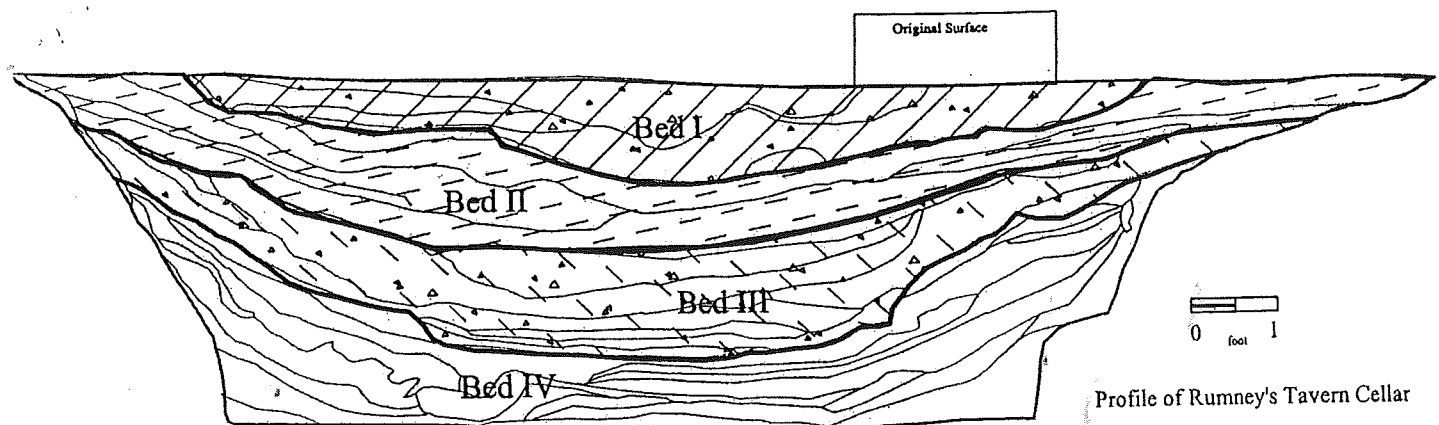


FIGURE 3. Profile drawing of the Rumney's Tavern cellar hole.

TABLE 1. Glass vessel forms from Rumney's Tavern.

VESSEL FORM	NUMBER	PER CENT
Case bottle	4	5
Onion bottle	1	1
Straight-onion bottle	3	4
Mallet bottle	7	9
Indeterminate bottle	39	38
Flask	1	1
Table glass	18	24
Medicine bottle	11	14
Perfume bottle	1	1
Mirror glass	1	1
Totals	76	100

33 consist of mended bases, four of which are 18th-century pint and quart case bottles. Cylindrical bottles ($n=40$) constitute the majority of the bottle class, and the majority of the glass vessel assemblage ($n=76$). Due to breakage and incomplete vessel recovery (only half of the cellar has been excavated and some glass was plowed out of the cellar), only a small portion of the vessels can be described as to form.

Ten vessels represent two 18th-century bottle forms, as defined by Dumbrell (1983): the mallet bottle, and the straight-sided onion, or transitional mallet (Figures 5a and 5b, respectively). The three straight-sided onion bottles date to circa 1715-1720. They derive from the bottom trash layer (Bed V) in the cellar. The seven true mallet bottles are from the upper trash

layers of the cellar and are similar to forms manufactured circa 1720-1730. Both types were free-blown and hand-tooled from uncolored (olive green) soda glass and sported pronounced kick-ups and applied string rims.

The bottle assemblage contains four case bottles: one aqua-colored, the other three natural green. The aqua-colored piece, the soundest of the four bases, measures three inches across and includes a portion of one wall (Figure 6). The three green case bottle bases are highly patinated and too poorly preserved to measure or illustrate. Although too fragmentary to permit volume calculations, all of the bases probably represent pint or quart bottles typical of the early 18th century.

Two unusual forms appear among the mended beverage bottles: a possible shaft-and-globe vessel and a flask. The former is a free-blown, hand-tooled, green soda glass bottle with an applied string rim (Figure 7). Although lacking most of the body and all of the base, this specimen appears to have had a globular body and a long, relatively slender neck, rising from the rounded shoulders. This bottle was recovered from the upper trash layer of the cellar, its circa 1680-1690 date inconsistent with the estimated ca. 1715-1730 date for the upper trash stratum assemblage. While such an inconsistency may have resulted from careful reuse of the bottle or aging of wine in bottles, Noël Hume suggests that the vessel may be a Dutch globular bottle form dating to ca. 1740, an attribution consistent with the date estimated for the upper trash layer (Noël Hume, personal communication, 1997).

The aqua-colored flask with applied string-rim (Figure 8) closely resembles a vessel recovered from the St. John's site in St. Mary's City, Maryland (Silas Hurry, personal communication, 1997). The body is flattened on two opposing sides and the entire vessel

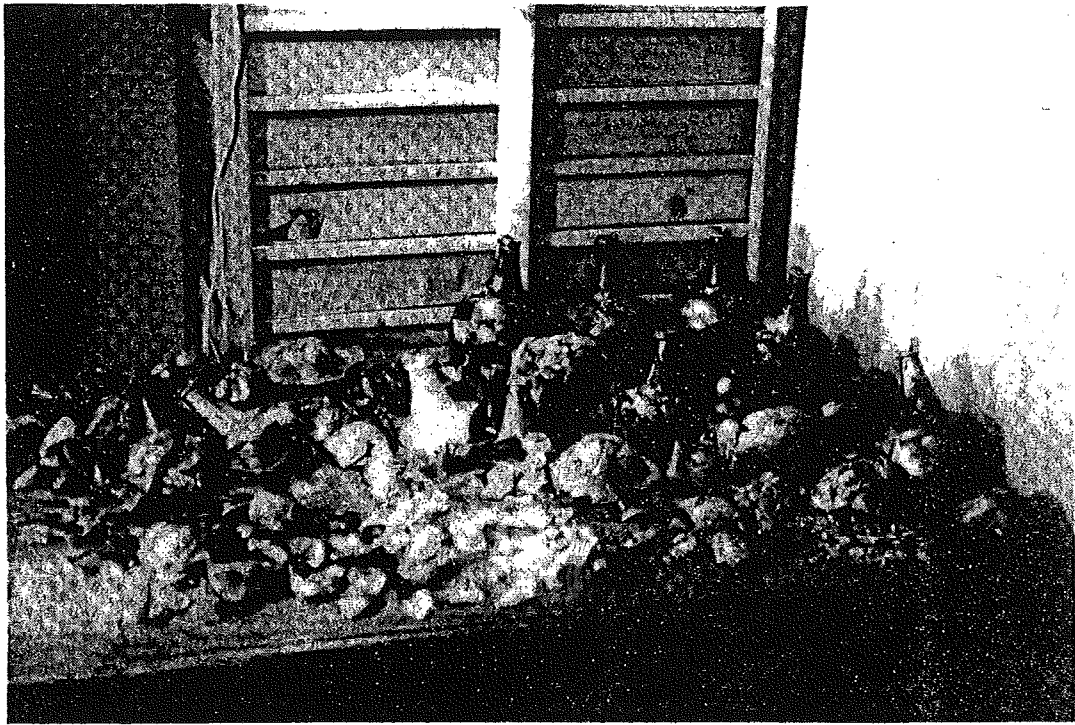


FIGURE 4. Mended wine bottles, table glass, and flask.

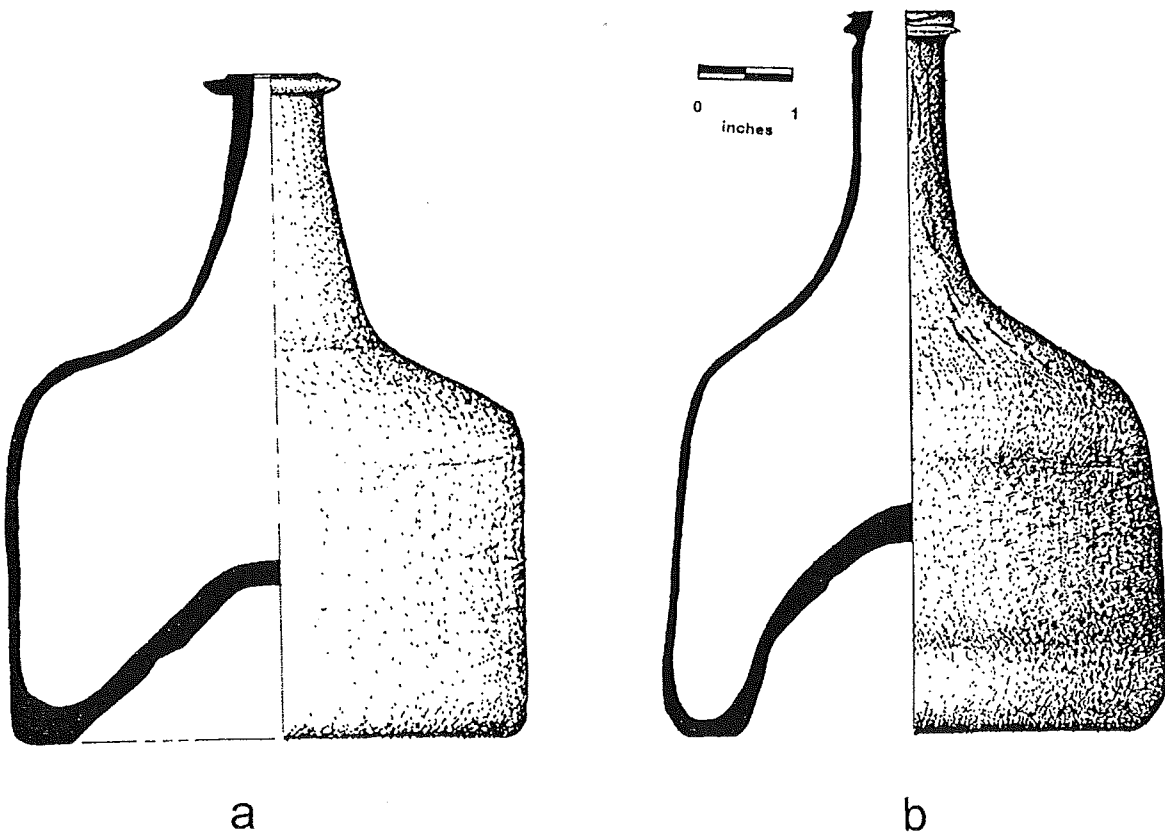


FIGURE 5. Straight-sided onion and mallet bottle forms.

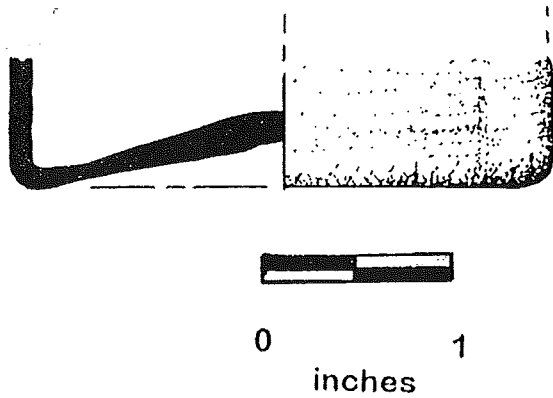


FIGURE 6. Case bottle base.

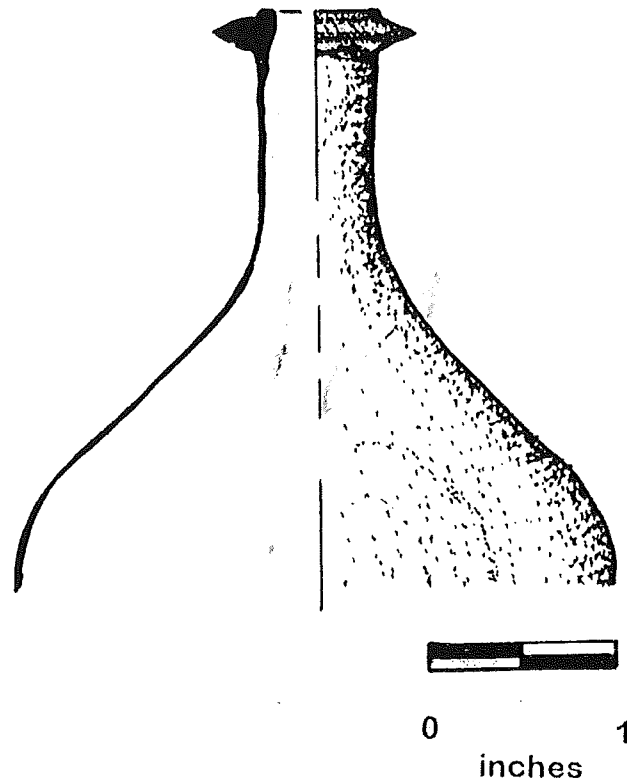


FIGURE 8. Flask.

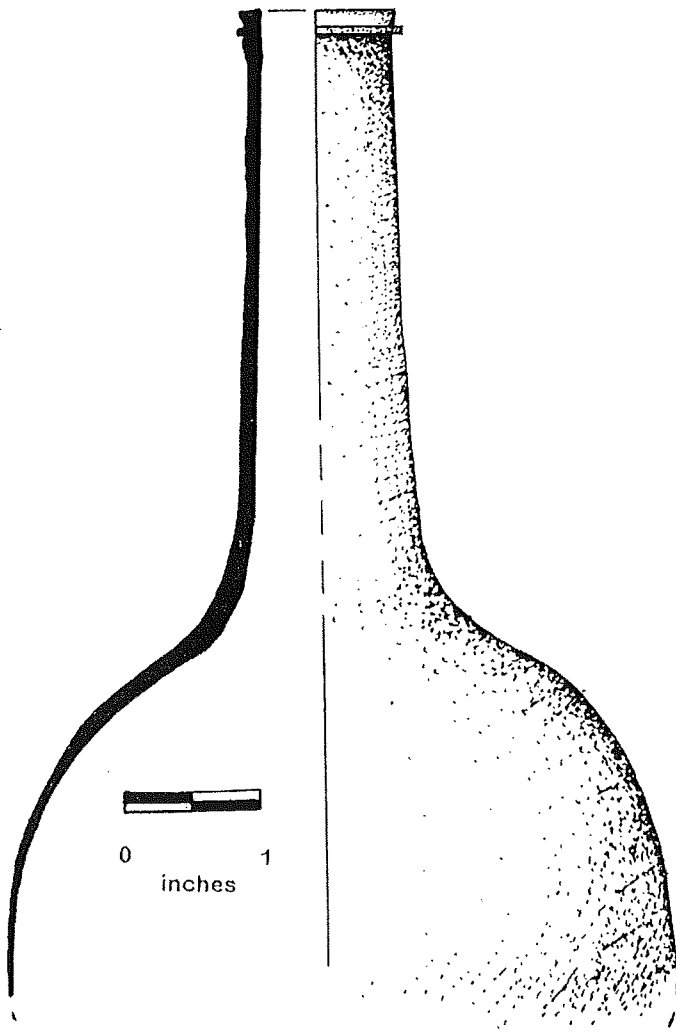


FIGURE 7. Shaft-and-globe bottle.

attains a height in excess of 3.5 inches. The base is missing, but the neck and rim are intact. The neck and bore diameters measure 0.63 and 0.50 inches, respectively.

Drinking Glasses

The cellar hole yielded a minimum of 18 clear, flint-glass drinking vessels, including a dram glass and a variety of stemmed glasses (Figure 9). Two lobes of a quatrefoil stem (too fragmentary for illustration) represent an Anglicized-Venetian drinking glass, attributable to the period 1676-1690. Recovered from the upper trash layers, the manufacturing date of this piece is earlier than the manufacturing dates of the associated beverage bottles. Was it an old-fashioned glass consigned to tavern use, or was it a family heirloom carefully conserved but eventually broken? Both explanations have important implications for the interpretation of the tavern, its clientele, and the domestic lives of the Rumney household as they lived and worked in the same space. The quatrefoil stem eludes interpretation.

Only one small sherd of English enameled glass, dating to circa 1720, was recovered from the cellar. A

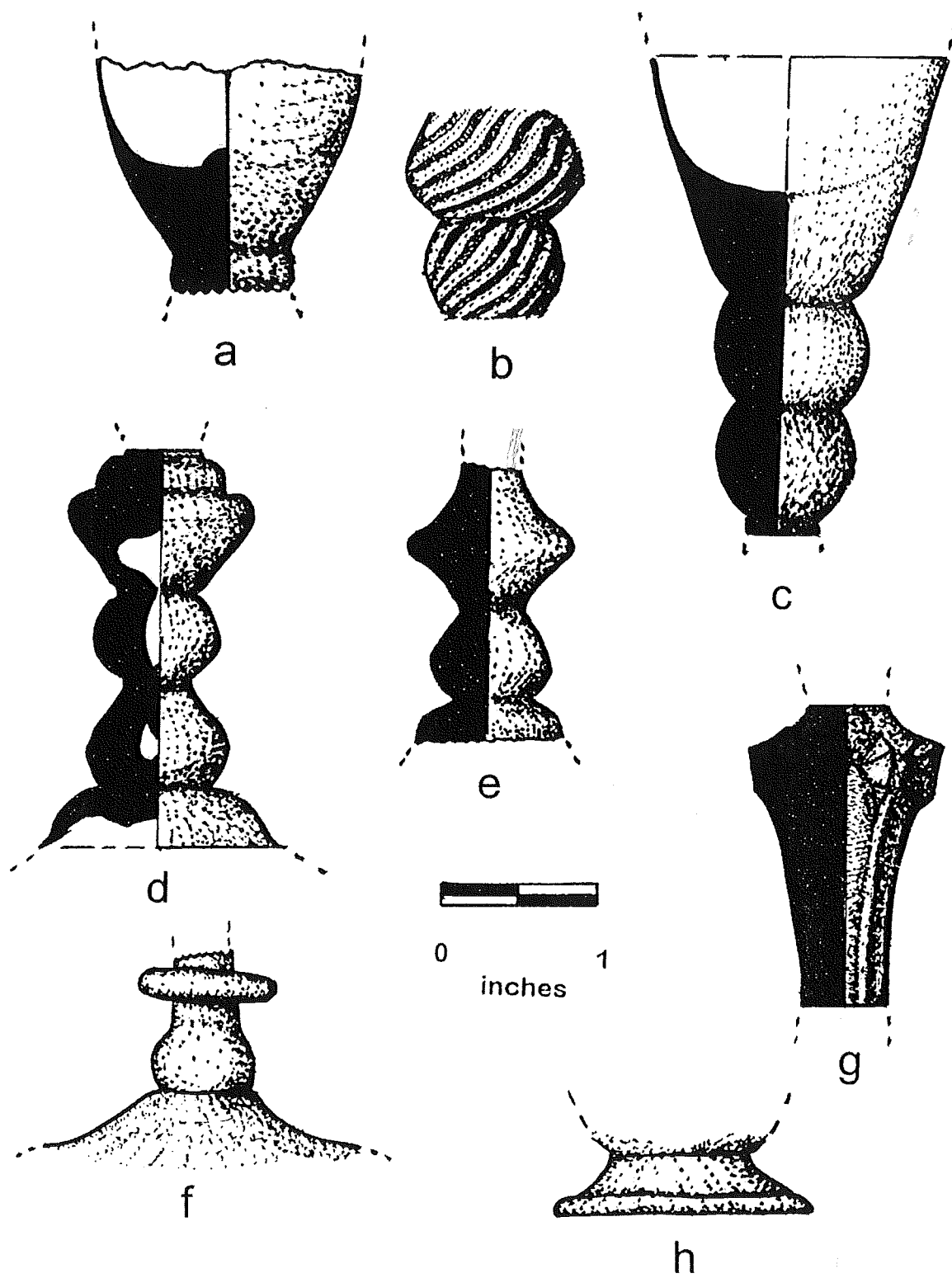


FIGURE 9. Table glass stems.

body sherd decorated with thinly applied blue and white enamel, this piece is too small to determine decorative motif or vessel form.

The dram glass has a plain solid foot, the bowl joining directly to the foot (Figure 9h). Dram glasses were used in taverns as early as 1710 for dramming, the gulping of such "strong waters" as whiskey, rum, and gin (Hughes 1956: 227).

The baluster and knob stemmed glasses from the cellar date to the reign of George I (1714-1727). Knob forms in the Rumney's Tavern assemblage include acorn, ball, and cushion knobs, with subsidiary knobs above and below the large, primary knobs (see Figures 9a,c-f). The surviving solid-base bowls are welded directly to the stem. A few of the knobs display air-bubbles, or tears, as does one solid-base bowl. One baluster and knob stem also is incised and twisted (see Figure 9b), a decorative technique popular circa 1710-1720 (Hughes 1956, especially Chapters 4 and 5).

Silesian stems are contemporary with baluster and knob stems. Three Silesian stems are of the reeded six-sided type (see Figure 9g), dating to the 1720s. One example also has diamond bosses on the shoulder of the stem. The fourth Silesian piece, dating to ca. 1720, is a four-sided stem with vertical reeds embellished with bosses at the shoulder. All four stems differ considerably from the streamlined, or tavern vari-

ety, goblet (Figure 10). The goblet's trumpet-shaped bowl merges into a plain solid stem and a folded foot rim. This tavern variety glass was popular from circa 1725-1760 (Hughes 1956).

Pharmaceutical Vials

After a night of dramming and reveling, tavern patrons may have called for hang-over remedies. The 11 pharmaceutical vials recovered from the cellar hole suggest that Rumney acted as a post-revel pharmacist. Three types of vial were recovered. Noël Hume dates the conical, or "steeple," vial (Noël Hume 1991:72-73) to circa 1660 (Figure 11). The vessel recovered from the cellar hole is nearly intact, lacking only a portion of the cylindrical neck and the rim. The metal is thin and aqua-colored and the kick-up is small, but easily discerned. What was in this early bottle? Was it re-filled and reused?

The ten cylindrical vials represent two size classes, the significance of which remains to be determined. The two larger vials stand 4.5 inches tall, supported on 2-inch bases with small conical kick-ups (Figure 12). Both aqua-colored vessels were recovered from the upper trash layer. The eight smaller vials range in color from a light, almost colorless green to medium green and aqua. They stand 2.5-3 inches tall and have base diameters of 1-1.2 inches and small conical kick-ups (Figure 13). Both sizes date to the first half of the 18th century.

Among the pharmaceutical vials is a small, molded, flint-glass bottle that appears to have been a

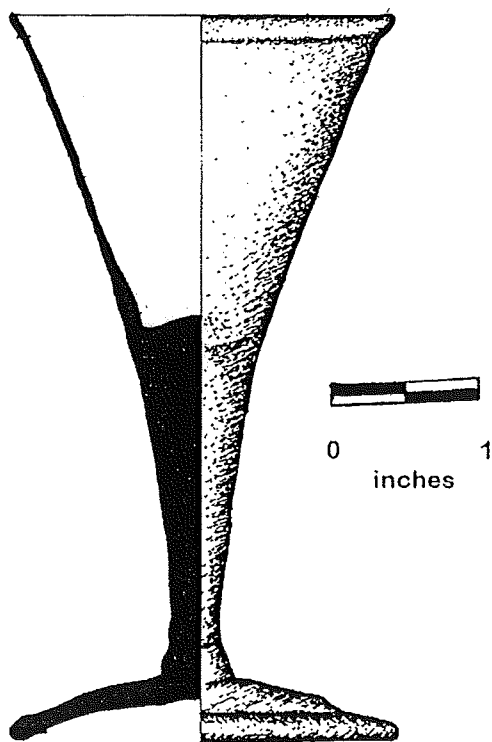


FIGURE 10. Trumpet-shaped goblet.

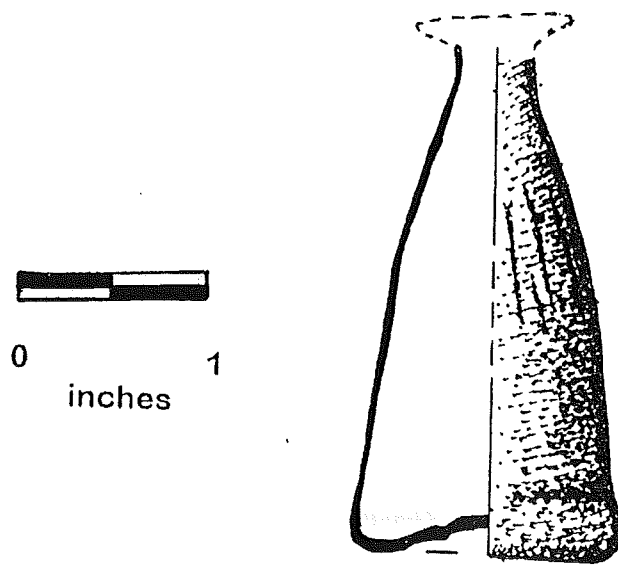


FIGURE 11. Conical vial.

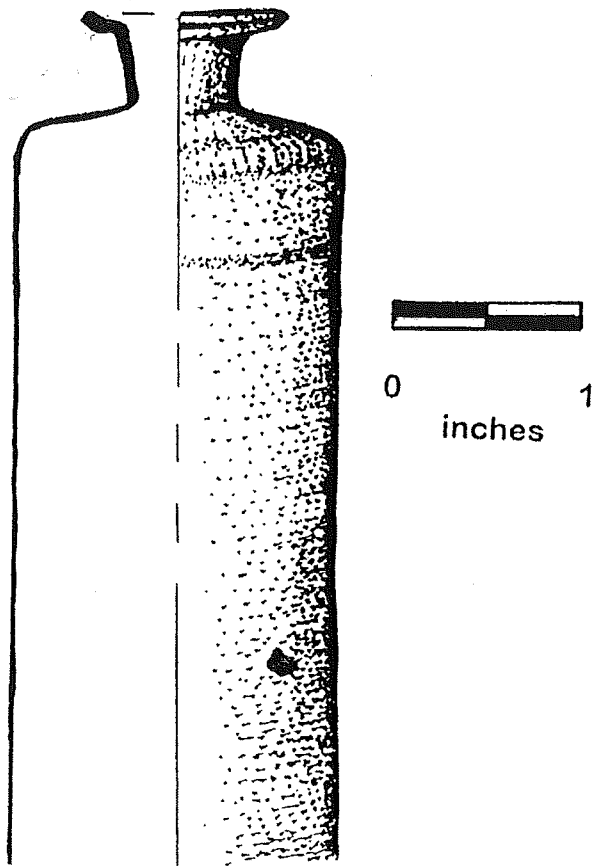


FIGURE 12. Large cylindrical vial.

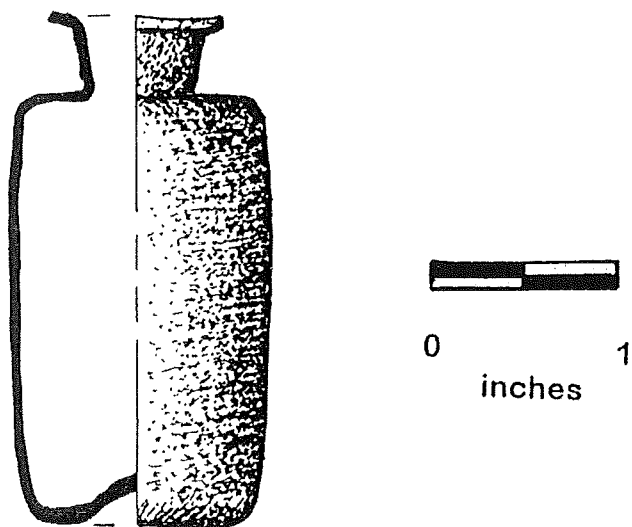


FIGURE 13. Small cylindrical vial.

perfume, or scent, bottle (Figure 14). It measures in excess of 3 inches in height (the upper neck and rim have been broken), 0.90 inches wide at the base, and 0.43 inches in depth. The bottle is flattened in section and waisted just above the base. A white precipitate

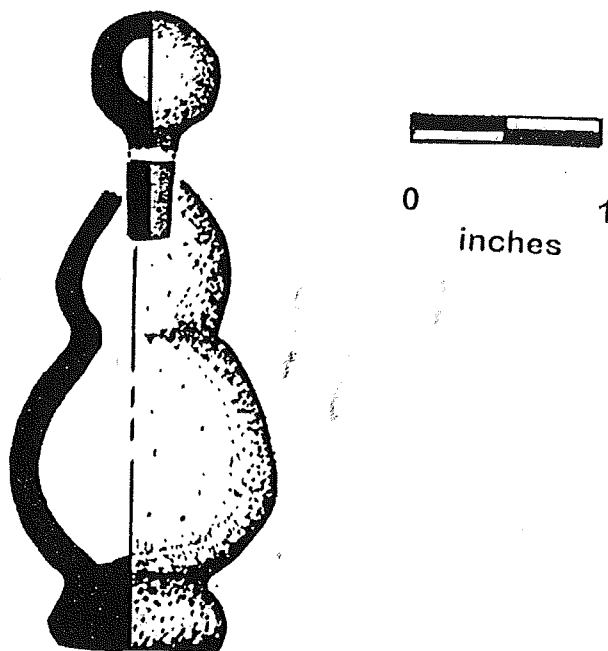


FIGURE 14. Scent bottle.

covers one side of the bottle's interior. A glass stopper, probably part of the scent bottle, consists of a cylindrical portion that tapers from 0.28 to 0.31 inches and a molded spherical finial. The bottle and stopper combined attain a height of 3.5 to 3.63 inches. Along with the silvered glass mirror fragments, the scent bottle represents personal grooming, behavior most characteristic of the wealthy in the first half of the 18th century.

Conclusions

Excavations of the Rumney/West tavern produced a rich array of glasswares, including 44 beverage bottles, a flask, 11 pharmaceutical vials, a scent bottle, and 18 flint-glass drinking vessels. Compared to pewter, stoneware, and earthenware vessels, flint-glass was relatively expensive in the 18th century, and a good deal more fragile. More important, the drinking glasses and vials represent forms of socializing and social consumption more likely to have been found in some taverns than others. Considered in connection with the tin-glazed punch bowls, cups, and plates also recovered from the cellar hole, the glass assemblage suggests formal, mannered dining and entertainment consistent with the courtly behavior described by Yentsch (1990). Even the beverage bottles and the flask suggest drinks and ways of drinking very different from those of other taverns servicing a broader, less socially-prominent, clientele.

The scent bottle and mirror also point to an elite clientele, concerned with personal grooming and — by extension — distinguishing themselves from the majority of the colony's residents. One also must consider Edward Rumney and his possible attempts at gaining prestige in the community, providing exceptional accommodations to elite planters and merchants, and exploiting those social connections to increase both his wealth and his prestige. Rumney spent beyond his means, succumbing to bankruptcy and defaulting on his mortgage in 1720. His successor, Stephen West, Sr., successfully made the transition from innkeeper and ferryman to gentleman by 1743, when West adopted the honorific 'Gentleman.' William Brown, who tells posterity fairly clearly that he catered to 'Gentlemen,' also left material evidence of his bid for wealth and prestige: a two-story, brick, Palladian-style mansion that may have served him both as dwelling and tavern. Brown, however — like Rumney — overextended himself, joining many of his neighbors in bankruptcy during the economic depression of the post-Revolutionary War period. The credit crunch destroyed Brown's ambitions and ultimately led to the dissolution of London as a town.

Acknowledgments

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The Lost Towns of Anne Arundel Project is sponsored by the Anne Arundel County Department of Planning & Code Enforcement. Its mission: to involve the public in original archeological, archival, and environmental research, focusing on Colonial Period town sites in the county.