

**“The Identification of the Feature Designated the ‘Tack House’ at the Oliver
House Archaeological Site”**

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The discovery of artifacts, exciting though it may be, is not the entire goal of archaeology. With the uncovering of each new item the archaeologist must work to figure out what that item means in both the small and large picture. There are all manner of circumstances which thwart the archaeologists' best efforts to interpret the artifacts. Among these setbacks include looting of the site and the destruction of buildings. These two are mentioned specifically because both occurred at the Oliver House site and greatly increased the difficulty of the goal of this paper.

This paper focuses on the identification of one specific feature - designated the "Tack House" - of the Oliver House site. All that remains of this outbuilding are its stone, inset walls and the artifacts found therein. Identification remains a daunting task because of the curious variety of artifacts that have been recovered and the circumstances surrounding the building's history. The "Tack House" is located on the site of a late nineteenth- early twentieth-century farmstead in Rayland, Ohio. The 53 ½ acre property was owned by James A. Oliver and family.

Several people - past and present - who are associated with the Oliver property are here listed. This following information was all provided by Fred Posgai, the current landowner. James A. Oliver and Jennie E. Oliver were the inhabitants of the Oliver House from about 1870 until 1928. In 1928 the fifty-three and one half acres upon which the Oliver House was built was sold by Jennie Oliver to Alex and Meri Salamon. The Salamon's sold the property in 1947 to George and Howard Luce. In 1959 Robert and Pearl Hartsouk bought the property from the Luce brothers. Robert would later pass away and Pearl would be remarried to Howard Sole. Fred Posgai bought the land in

| 2006. Ora Baumberger, a young girl at the turn of the twentieth century, was a neighbor of the Oliver's.

Sometime between 1915 and 1925 the Oliver House caught on fire and was burned to the ground. Fred Pogai relates that it was Pearl Sole's daughter and son-in-law who went to the site and discovered bottles and other artifacts - which they may or may not have taken. Pearl apparently also had tenants who heard of the artifacts and may have looted the site. The identity of the looters is unknown but there were looters. Several "kneelers", shovels, and other digging and collecting utensils (not of the Oliver House period) have been found within the "Tack House." Looters would have taken many of the complete artifacts, such as jars, bottles, crocks, and tools. Besides the removal of the artifacts, looters also *move* the artifacts which distorts the context of the site.

Information about the Oliver family comes primarily from four sources: [1] a 1987 taped interview between Fred Posgai and Ora Baumberger, [2] the artifacts at the site, [3] the available censuses, and [4] a historical book of the area published in 1880.

James A. Oliver was born on December 28th, 1851 in Warren Township. Rayland, where the Oliver House is located, is in Warren Township which is part of Jefferson County. One source does list a "one-James A. Oliver" as a member of an 1861 Steubenville, Ohio infantry unit - Company I - 20th Regiment O.V. 1.¹ However, it is not certain, though it seems highly likely, that this James A. Oliver is the same Oliver who owned the "Tack House." On October 30th, 1872 James Oliver married Emma Jane (Jennie) Carpenter in Steubenville, Ohio. The only other personal information about

¹ A.J. Caldwell, *History of Belmont and Jefferson Counties, OH and Incidentally Historical Collections Pertaining to Border Warfare and the Early Settlement of the Adjacent Portion of the Ohio Valley* (Wheeling: Historical Publishing Co., 1880), 451.

James Oliver is that he was apparently a drunkard² and that he died in 1926. The year of Oliver's death is supported by the census information. Both James and Jennie appear on the 1910 census but in 1928, when Jennie sold the property, she is noted as being a widow. Due to the fact that the ~~The~~ 1920 census was accidentally destroyed, ~~so~~ all that is known for sure is that James Oliver died between 1910 and 1928.

James' wife Jennie was one of A.J. and Sarah (Marshall) Carpenter's fourteen children. Her father, and possibly her as well, came from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Mr. ~~Mr.~~ Carpenter eventually came to own ~~was in the possession of~~ 320 acres of land, much of which was apparently good for grain and grazing. In 1880 he was listed as owning 500 head of fine sheep. ~~One~~ One year prior he is recorded as raising 750 bushels of wheat and 2,000 bushels of corn. In 1877 he raised 3,000 bushels of corn and 1,500 bushels of apples.³ All indicators point to A.J. Carpenter being a successful farmer. The fifty-three and one half acres that James and Jennie Oliver lived on was given to them by Mr. Carpenter who in turn had bought it from a Mary Hantch in 1858. Whether or not James Oliver was a successful farmer it should be noted that his family did have a source of money in A.J. Carpenter.

All of the census information – including names, ages, and dates of various events – was obtained by Jeff Carskadden. This author was given the information by Joseph Brian DaRe who had originally received the same information from Mr. Carskadden in three separate e-mails. The 1880 census lists the members of the Oliver household as follows:

² Oliver House Property Owner Fred Posgai, interview by author, 4 April 2009, Rayland, transcript, personal collection.

³ A.J. Caldwell, *History of Belmont and Jefferson Counties, OH and Incidentally Historical Collections Pertaining to Border Warfare and the Early Settlement of the Adjacent Portion of the Ohio Valley* (Wheeling: Historical Publishing Co., 1880), 610.

James Oliver, 25
Jane, 30
Bert, 6
Maggie, 4
Pearl, 2
Winnie Hanlin, 8 (a servant of the Oliver's)

The 1900 census supplies the following information:

James Oliver, 47
Emma J., 50
Pearl B, 21
Ora B, 17
Nellie, 15
Laura, 14
John A, 10

There are obviously several discrepancies between the two censuses. In the 1880 census James and Jane (Jennie) are five years apart in age. Twenty years later they appear as only three years apart. The names of the children, and even of Jennie, seem to change from one census to another. In general all discrepancies can be partially explained by the fact that the census was handwritten and then transcribed. If the official who was translating the census could not read the handwriting then mistakes may have been made. Also the census was not taken all on one day but over a period of time. One year it may have been taken after someone's birthday and the next time it may have been taken before. Information recorded in the census also depended on who the census taker spoke with. Below is a list of the years of birth and death for all the children, from oldest to youngest:

Albertis (Bert) - born c. 1874, d. 1940
Margaret (Maggie) Jane - born 1877, died 1940
Pearl Virginia - born 1878, died 1952
Ora Bell - born 1882, died 1935
Nellie Grey - born 1884, died 1947
Laura - born 1885, died 1967

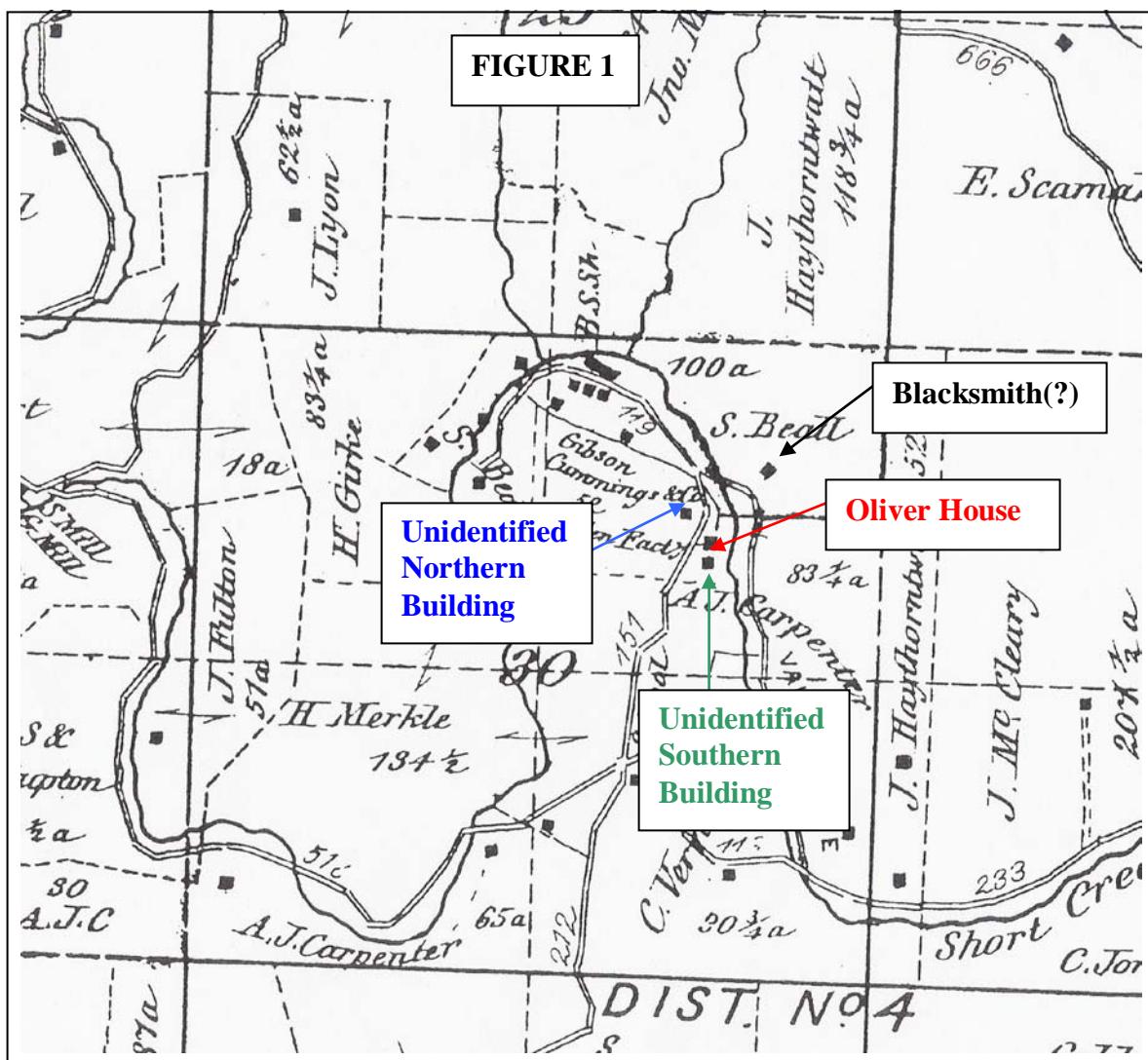
John R. - born 1890, died 1951

This paper will attempt to discover the use of the Oliver “Tack House” by both a compare-and-contrast process and process of elimination. As noted above, at this stage in the “Tack House” excavations the best chance of correctly identifying it will be to determine what it could *not* have been. This can be done on two levels: first, by discovering what other buildings were located on the property and second, by analyzing the architectural remains and the artifacts of the “Tack House.”

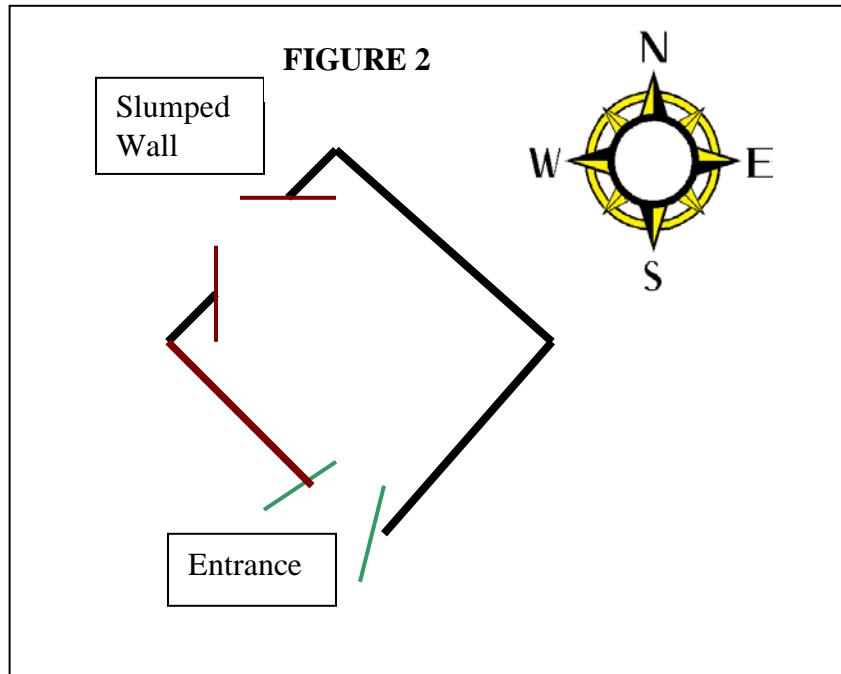
Based on structural remains, there appears to have been at least five buildings on the Oliver property: [1] the main house, [2] the “Tack House”, [3] a barn, and [4-5] two unidentified buildings. A successful nineteenth-century farm could generally boast two barns and at least ten outbuildings.⁴ Of the five buildings, only four are visible today. The remains of a barn located in the field northeast of the “Tack House” were, according to Fred Posgai, completely destroyed by a bulldozer about ten years ago. Running within feet of the front of the Oliver house was an extensive road, impressions of which can still be seen today. To the north of the road on the opposite side as the house are the remains of what appears to be a retaining wall and another small structure. Whether or not this structure was in any way associated with the Oliver’s is yet to be determined. No more than thirty feet west of the main house are the recently uncovered foundations of a very small stone structure, possibly a fireplace, and a large concentration of food preparation artifacts nearby. This information, along with its proximity to the house, indicates the presence of a structure distinct from the house.

⁴ Donald Berg, *American Country Building Designs: Rediscovered Plans for 19th-Century Farmhouses, Cottages, Landscapes, Barns, Carriage Houses, and Outbuildings* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 1997), 108.

An 1871 map [FIGURE 1] shows only three buildings: one north of the road and two south of the road - very near to each other. The structure on the map north of the road may be the same as the small structure whichwhose remains can still be seen along with the retaining wall. One of the two buildings south of the road is the Oliver House and the other more southerly structure remains unidentified. Its location on the map would suggest that it may be the building whichwhose foundations were recently discovered. The Oliver's also had a well or cistern which is located directly external to the house foundations.



Interestingly, the “Tack House” does not show up on the map and was only identified as such by Pearl Sole.⁵ The general layout can bee seen in Figure Two.



It is a four-sided structure approximately ten feet by ten feet in size. The “Tack House’s” northwest, northeast, and southeast walls, all made from locally quarried stone, were excavated into a hillside. The southwest wall, which contains the entranceway, is not excavated. The quarry from which the stone was taken was located on A.J. Carpenter’s land. Running through it was the road which passed the Oliver House. The northwest wall, nearest the main house, has been badly damaged by erosion. All that can be seen of its stone walls are the two corners; the middle being almost completely slumped.

~~The identification of the “Tack House” has one significant limitation: excavation of the “Tack House” has been neither properly nor completely done. To this point all artifacts have been collected via surface collection. This process, though not a hindrance in and of~~

⁵ Oliver House Property Owner Fred Posgai, interview by author, 4 April 2009, Rayland, transcript, personal collection.

~~itself, should not be the sole means of excavating a site. Surface collection is an important aspect of any excavation and can be invaluable in providing information on the age and occupational periods of a site.⁶ The “Tack House” contained many “surface” artifacts which made this process simple and rewarding, but further excavating will be crucial.~~ Figure 3 displays the breakdown, per bag, of the type and frequency of the 1141 artifacts obtained thus far from the “Tack House”.

FIGURE 3
Frequency of
Artifact Types

	Utilitarian Ware	Table Ware	Glass	Metal	Leather	Other	Bone
Bag 1	0	0	18	0	0	0	0
Bag 2	0	0	32	1	0	0	0
Bag 3	0	0	65	0	0	0	0
Bag 4	0	0	0	8	0	0	0
Bag 5	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Bag 6	1	0	0	2	0	0	0
Bag 7	37	58	2	0	0	0	0
Bag 8	6	8	44	25	4	25	0
Bag 9	1	10	31	13	2	3	0
Bag 10	3	2	48	17	4	11	1
Bag 11	10	54	355	22	7	36	1
Bag 12	0	0	0	0	0	12	0
Bag 13	12	24	49	7	0	3	0
Bag 14	4	15	19	11	14	2	0
	74	171	665	106	31	92	2

However, artifact frequency can be slightly misleading. Although by numerical quantity more glass and tableware artifacts have been found than food storage artifacts, this is due mainly to the way in which such artifacts break. Tableware and glass, being more fragile than storage vessels, break into smaller pieces and therefore yield a higher frequency.

⁶ Archaeology, page 140

Stoneware, as the name implies, is very hard. It is made from coarse clay which does not lose its original form when fired at high temperatures.⁷ The Oliver and surrounding families would have bought or traded for their ceramic wares from a local potter. Utilitarian stoneware vessels came into prominence during the period of increased agricultural productivity of the nineteenth century. The vessels produced at this time were well suited to food storage, more efficient than previous methods, and cheaper than metal vessels.⁸

The glass found within the “Tack House” is particularly interesting. Among the usual and expected artifacts – beer and medicinal jars – the “Tack House” contained several exquisite, if not expensive, glass artifacts. These plates, saucers, glasses, and even perfume bottles would seem to be much more at home in the actual house. This is one of the most confusing aspects of the “Tack House.” Very little window glass has been found which may indicate either the lack of windows or few or small windows.

Metal objects in the “Tack House” generally consist of rusted nails and screws but also some much larger artifacts. Several pieces of an apparent pulley system have been uncovered as well as what appears to be either jewelry or decorative tack apparel.

In the presence of leather we have the main reason for referring to the “Tack House” as such. The term “tack” generally refers to the gear used in equipping a horse, including bridles and saddles. It must be noted that none of the leather found in the “Tack House” can be identified as equestrian in nature. On the contrary, most of the

⁷ Georgeanna Greer, *American Stonewares: The Art and Craft of Utilitarian Potters*, rev. 4th ed. (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2005), 15.

⁸ Georgeanna Greer, *American Stonewares: The Art and Craft of Utilitarian Potters*, rev. 4th ed. (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2005), 22.

leather appears to have been for human use, such as the several pieces of a shoe (or shoes) which have been found.

For the purpose of this paper it is necessary to define several key terms. On a general level it is important to understand the difference, slight though it may be, between a *homestead* and a *farmstead*. A homestead is usually comprised of a home, barn, and other domestic buildings. It is marked by the absence of agriculturally related buildings. Farmsteads are a property which, like the homestead, includes a home and at least one barn, but also includes many other structures used for agricultural functions.⁹ In other words, every farmstead is a homestead, but not every homestead is a farmstead. The term *outbuilding* must also necessarily be defined. An outbuilding is any structure which is detached or secondary in function to a main building such as a house or barn.

One advantage in identifying the “Tack House” is its relatively small size. Not only does this fact rule out several large buildings but it also indicates something about its function or functions. Large buildings can be used for any number of things, from animal living quarters to crop storage to storage in general. Smaller buildings, however, are not quite as utilitarian. Tasks that require little space may be completed in a large building, but tasks that require much space cannot be done in a small building.

Common nineteenth-century outbuildings, of a size similar to that of the “Tack House” include, but are not limited to: chicken houses, cellars, spring-houses, milk-houses, and summer kitchens. Small size regardless, there is still the possibility that the “Tack House” was used for various purposes which would make “defining” it as a specific type of building not only difficult but erroneous. Research may simply indicate

⁹ Allen Noble and Richard Cleek, *The Old Barn Book* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 135.

that it was the center of various purposes and tasks and not intended for any one specific use. The original function of the “Tack House” may be indistinguishable from the functions that it served over time.

Chicken House

Though a chicken house is a highly unlikely use for the “Tack House”, it is included for one important reason but will only be discussed briefly. In the interview between Fred Posgai and Ora Baumberger in 1987, Mrs. Baumberger relates a story about James Oliver’s habit of stealing his wife’s chickens so he could trade them for booze.¹⁰ Clearly then the Oliver’s had chickens, but did they keep them in the “Tack House”? There is no evidence which would lead one to determine that chickens were in fact kept within the “Tack House.”

Cellar

Cellars were not only common to all homes but before refrigeration were necessities.¹¹ Generally constructed of stone and mortar, they were built into natural slopes to provide as much insulation as possible. Maximum insulation was achieved by separating the two walls with a space in between. The inner wall was four inches thick and made of brick while the outer wall was over a foot thick and made of stone. Some sort of insulator, usually ash or sand, was stuffed in the two-inch space between the two

¹⁰ Ora Baumberger, interview by Fred Posgai, 1987, video recording, personal collection.

¹¹ Faulkner, Charles H. “The Pit Cellar: a Nineteenth Century Storage Facility.” *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Symposium on Ohio Valley Urban and Historic Archaeology Hosted by the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania Held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 21-22 March 1986*, edited by Donald B. Ball and Philip J. DiBlasi (Kentucky: University of Louisville Archaeology Program, 1986), 54.

walls¹². Complete cellars can easily be identified by a sloping door and the necessary ventilation pipe.¹³ Within these structures would be stored all manner of food, namely anything that would go to waste quickly or was not going to be consumed for some time.

A publication released in 1978 by the United States Department of Agriculture offers useful insight on traditional methods of food preservation via the partly underground cellar: “One type of cellar that can be used in colder parts of the country has walls of masonry that are partly underground. Soil is banked around three walls, and one wall is left exposed for an insulated double door.”¹⁴ This description is similar to that of the “Tack House.”

Food storage vessels such as stoneware containers are commonly found within cellars. The “Tack House” has thus far yielded many utilitarian and table wares. Based on this information, it is highly probable that the “Tack House” was a cellar or was at least used as such.

A specific type of cellar that has potential relevance to identifying the “Tack House” is the pit cellar. Professor Charles Faulkner of the University of Tennessee offers this description:

The pit cellar is also found under buildings, but the walls are not part of the foundation. There are two forms of the pit cellar. One is a large excavation, usually under a house, whose walls conform to the dimensions of the room above. The walls may or may not be lined. There is always an outside entryway and sometimes one from the overhead room as well. The other form is a small square or rectangular pit dug beneath the floor, the walls and floor being of earth or sometimes lined with timber. Unlike

¹² Donald Berg, *American Country Building Designs: Rediscovered Plans for 19th-Century Farmhouses, Cottages, Landscapes, Barns, Carriage Houses, and Outbuildings* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 1997), 131.

¹³ Allen Noble and Richard Cleek, *The Old Barn Book* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 142.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Storing Vegetables and Fruits in Basements, Cellars, Outbuildings, and Pits* (Washington D.C.: 1978), 3.

the large pit cellar, these features seldom, if ever, had an outside entryway. Access was through the floor of the room above.¹⁵

The point of emphasis here is that the “Tack House” may not only have been a “free-standing” cellar but a cellar located under another building. Unfortunately this cannot be proven by merely looking at the site. Everything but the “Tack House’s” stone foundations has disappeared. Furthermore, pit cellars often contain secondary midden deposits and very few artifacts from primary use.¹⁶ Both of these characteristics have potential application to the “Tack House.” A surface collection and survey of the area immediately surrounding the “Tack House” would provide vital clues.

Spring-House

Most of the dairy work on a small farm was done in the spring-house. These small structures were built over a spring or running water to take advantage of a freshwater source and its cooling properties. Spring-houses were commonly made of masonry and, like cellars, were excavated into a slope for cooling purposes. Besides the cooling of milk and other foods almost every step of butter making would occur in the spring-house.¹⁷

It would be expected then to find artifacts associated with milk production and storage, butter production and storage, and food storage in general. As noted above, the

¹⁵ Faulkner, Charles H. “The Pit Cellar: a Nineteenth Century Storage Facility.” *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Symposium on Ohio Valley Urban and Historic Archaeology Hosted by the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania Held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 21-22 March 1986*, edited by Donald B. Ball and Philip J. DiBlasi (Kentucky: University of Louisville Archaeology Program, 1986), 54.

¹⁶ Judith Thomas, “An Examination of Early 19th Century Settlement in the Ohio Valley as Reflected in the Kelley Historic Site” (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 1993), 51.

¹⁷ Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, “Spring House,” <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bhp/Agricultural/Context/FieldGuide/Outbuilding/Springhouse.asp>.

“Tack House” has yielded such artifacts. However, without the presence of a stream or spring, it is unlikely that the “Tack House” was a spring-house.

Milk-House

Milk-houses served a function similar to cellars - namely the preservation of foodstuffs, specifically milk. They arose out of the need to protect fresh milk from the unsanitary conditions of the barn environment. However, milk-houses served other purposes as well. Though generally made from concrete block or rock face concrete milk-houses were not generally built into slopes. Milk-houses that served the needs of only a family tended to be anywhere from seven feet by nine feet to twelve feet by twenty feet. It should be noted as well that milk-houses were a twentieth-century innovation intended to replace the spring-house. If the “Tack House” was a milk-house it was then either not built, or at least not used, as such until after 1900.¹⁸ Architecturally the “Tack House” does not appear to have been a milk house. It may have served some of the purposes that milk houses were built for, but was probably not built *as* a milk house.

Summer Kitchen

Another possibility is the summer kitchen. If a building was not originally intended as a summer house it was usually converted to one after the building of a new home. Most often though summer-kitchens were specifically built for that purpose.¹⁹ Characteristics include a fireplace or stove (and connecting chimney or stove pipe),

¹⁸ Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, “Milk House,” <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bhp/Agricultural/Context/FieldGuide/Outbuilding/milkhouse.asp>.

¹⁹ Allen Noble and Richard Cleek, *The Old Barn Book* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 146.

windows, doors, and an approximate square footage of 150-250 feet.²⁰ These buildings were located close to the main house so that food could be easily and rapidly brought to and fro.

Because summer kitchens were the center of most of a family's cooking activities one would expect to find mainly food preparation artifacts within. It would not be uncommon though to find some tableware artifacts because families would often eat inside the warm summer-kitchen during the colder months of the year.²¹ As much as the artifacts can say about what went on in the "Tack House", without clear evidence that there was some way to cook the food we must rule out the possibility that the "Tack House" was a summer kitchen. Further indications that this was not a summer kitchen are its relatively small size and far distance from the main house. The newly discovered structure west of the Oliver House would be a more likely candidate for a summer-kitchen.

Lower Level of a Larger Building

Though the archaeological evidence is insufficient, there may have been another larger structure directly above the "Tack House." An earthen ramp above the slumped wall would have led into this building. A building such as this could serve as a suitable barn for a small farm or a secondary barn on a larger farm. The bottom level (our "Tack House") would be used for food storage while the above level or levels would be used for

²⁰ Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, "Summer Kitchen," <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bhp/Agricultural/Context/FieldGuide/Outbuilding/summerkitchen.asp>.

²¹ Ibid.

animals, grain, or tools.²² Obviously animals and grain would not be found within the “Tack House” and because of the looting that occurred at the site, tools will probably not be found. Excavations of the land around the “Tack House” would have to be performed to make a more definitive assertion.

What then was the “Tack House” used for? Unfortunately there is not yet enough solid evidence to label the “Tack House” as a specific type of building. It seems likely that at least one of its main functions was that of cellar. The fact that the “Tack House” is built into the earth and that it contains many food preparation and preservation artifacts supports this hypothesis. It also seems likely that the “Tack House” may have served separate functions as well. The discovery of several leather shoe soles may indicate that shoe manufacturing processes occurred within the building. Until the artifacts are reassembled and further processed we will not definitively know what purpose they served. Without knowing what purpose the artifacts served it is difficult to determine what processes were carried out at the “Tack House.”

²² Donald Berg, *American Country Building Designs: Rediscovered Plans for 19th-Century Farmhouses, Cottages, Landscapes, Barns, Carriage Houses, and Outbuilding* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 1997), 107.

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<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bhp/Agricultural/Context/FieldGuide/Outbuilding/Springhouse.asp>.

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