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EARTHENWARE PRODUCTION IN THE RURAL NORTH 1830-1860:
AN ACCOUNT BOOK STUDY

by
Douglas F. Hawes

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University
of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements of
Master of Arts in Early American Culture.

Spring 1995

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AN ACCOUNT BOOK STUDY

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For Hannah and Mary
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the enduring viability of New England's earthenware pottery tradition in the nineteenth century by focusing on the career of Joseph Philbrick, a potter who worked in rural Maine, and on how redware continued to fill consumer needs. It challenges the common assumption that farmers made these ceramics on a part-time basis by demonstrating that customer demand was great enough to make potting Philbrick's primary occupation. Philbrick's business account book (daybook) provides the cornerstone of evidence for the thesis's conclusions. As an exercise in documentary archaeology, its entire contents were compiled for analysis using a computer database. Accounting practices are examined and recommendations on methodology proposed. Correlation of foodways, consumer behavior, and seasonal agricultural practices (seasonality) confirms that Philbrick's pottery business was integrally connected with the dairy agriculture market. Growth in dairy production in nineteenth-century Northern New England provided an economic atmosphere conducive to viable redware production.
Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

One of the most interesting aspects of New England's redware pottery tradition is its lasting viability through the nineteenth century. Redware was an inexpensive, lead-glazed earthenware usually made up of local red clays fired at a low temperature. This tradition of ceramic manufacture came with European potters to the earliest settlements in the New World where clay for redware was abundant and production required only the simplest kilns and equipment. Through the colonial period, use of redware was extremely common in New England, often making up more than 85 percent of ceramic samples from Northeastern archaeological sites.\(^1\) By the early nineteenth century, however, affordable alternatives composed of safer and more durable materials--refined ceramics, stoneware, tinware, and other materials--were increasingly produced and consumed on a large scale. Potters in New England responded to these changes in

various ways, but earthenware production generally shifted towards a more limited range of forms. Demand for basic utilitarian wares remained while products such as mugs, pitchers, bowls, and chamber pots, once staples of redware shops, gradually fell to secondary importance.

Joseph Philbrick (1797-1874) was one of several moderately successful New England craftsmen who made redware for a living during this period. After serving an apprenticeship, he moved away from his home in New Hampshire, settled in a small town in Maine, married, had a family, and made a business of redware for over fifty years. This thesis explores the lasting vitality of the redware tradition in New England through an examination of the nature and context of Philbrick's business and how it adapted to the highly competitive markets of the nineteenth-century. There has been little historical consideration of those tradesmen like Philbrick who thrived in the nineteenth century despite their retention of traditional modes of organization and production. Labor historians have commonly focused on the urban working classes and the impact of the industrial revolution. While advanced technology and factory labor came to characterize several crafts in the nineteenth century, including ceramics, many artisans maintained redware businesses in much the same fashion as they had
during colonial times. Due mostly to the paucity of written documentation, these traditional nineteenth-century craftspeople have received relatively little historical scrutiny. The things they made, however, continue to be a rich source of information for those who are trained in historical materials analysis. Indeed, their artifacts often constitute the most substantial evidence of their enduring significance in New England's economy. Fortunately, both documentary and artifactual data survive that give a reasonably good idea of Philbrick's life and career.

Production of nineteenth-century red earthenware is often associated with very conservative rural culture in America. A number of studies suggest that pottery making was characteristically an occasional rural trade frequently carried out by farmers in the off-seasons or in their spare time.\(^2\) John Worrell has argued that Hervey

Brooks, a farmer-potter working in Goshen, Connecticut in the 1800s, "fit the pattern that we are coming to understand to be the rule regarding crafts and low-technology enterprises in agrarian society in general: He was a farmer whose specialized contribution to the neighborhood was earthenware." Pottery making merely supplemented farming incomes because of "the universal, and drastic, decrease in demand for earthenware from the third decade of the nineteenth century onward." Redware was produced for conservative consumers in rural neighborhoods and "served a life-style that was increasingly obsolescent elsewhere." But Joseph Philbrick (and several other potters from Exeter, New Hampshire) did not fit a farmer-potter formula, nor did his customers appear to be neighborhood traditionalists intent on upholding a bygone custom. Up until at least 1985); Diana Stradling and J. Garrison Stradling, "Introduction," The Art of the Potter: Redware and Stoneware, (New York: Main Street/Universe Books, 1977), 7; Harold F. Guilland, Early American Folk Pottery (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Co., 1971), 15, 24; Lura Woodside Watkins, Early New England Potters and Their Wares (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 2. 3"Ceramic Production in the Exchange Network of an Agricultural Neighborhood," 161, 166. Study of Hervey Brooks has been the foundation for Old Sturbridge Village's reconstruction and living history interpretation of New England redware production. See Worrell, "Re-Creating Ceramic Production and Tradition in a Living History Laboratory," 81-97.
1860, consumer demand for redware was great enough to make pottery production Philbrick's primary occupation.

This thesis is comprised of three main chapters. Each investigates different aspects of Philbrick's pottery business. Together, they make up a case study in how a traditional New England redware business remained viable in the nineteenth century. The first of these chapters, Chapter 2, considers what the prospects of the pottery business were for Philbrick and other young men from Exeter, New Hampshire who were brought up in the trade. It traces the ways in which Exeter potters like Philbrick organized around family relationships and used a variety of strategies to establish profitable and sometimes lucrative earthenware businesses. Apart from pottery production, supplementary income strategies were complex, involving both occupational diversification and mixed household production.

Chapter 3 has a methodological orientation. It evaluates Philbrick's business account book, the most important source of evidence of Philbrick's career as a potter. The contents of the entire document are

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4Joseph Philbrick, Day Book vol. 2, 1833-1862, Ms. on file, Folio 74, The Winterthur Library: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur, Delaware. I would like to thank Amanda Lange, Assistant Curator of Historic Deerfield for bringing this remarkable document to my attention. Hereafter, all
considered for the purpose of understanding the account book itself, its function, and its significance to its owner. By comparing Joseph's account book to other types of record keeping devices and methods, a clearer idea emerges of how his account book was used. It finds that Philbrick used his account book primarily as an instrument for recording debts and not as an instrument for tracking all business activity. This accounting behavior has a significant impact on the ways its dense detail is used as historical evidence.

Chapter 4 uncovers basic qualities of Philbrick's pottery business by focusing on consumer behavior reflected in the daybook. Consumption patterns in Philbrick's daybook shed light on the redware potter's role in New England's pastoral society and the reasons his business remained viable in the nineteenth century. The daybook's abundant database is used to correlate pottery production with various types of economic activity and their relative importance. Seasonal dairy activity and pottery consumption show the integral connection between Philbrick's pottery business and Skowhegan's dairy economy. Growth in dairy agriculture in Northern New

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citations to Philbrick's daybook are to the daybook cited here unless specified otherwise.
England provided an economic atmosphere conducive to redware production.
Chapter 2

THE PROSPECTS OF THE POTTERY BUSINESS

Joseph Philbrick (1797-1874) (fig. 1) was the sixth child born into a family in the earthenware trade in Exeter, New Hampshire.¹ He grew up in a neighborhood that was a hive of pottery production, maybe the largest in New Hampshire.² Exeter had a rich earthenware tradition and the clay there had the reputation of being some of the finest for "throwing" in New England.³ Jabez (Jabesh) Dodge (1746/47-1806) came to dominate the earthenware trade there in the late eighteenth century, establishing a family tradition of pottery making in Exeter for 164 years. He married Lydia Philbrick in 1771 and soon after became legal guardian of her twelve year old brother, Samuel Philbrick

¹Jacob Chapman, A Genealogy of the Philbrick and Philbrook Families (Exeter, 1886), 84.
²Starbuck and Dupre, 134.
At ages 24 and 19, Jabez Dodge and Lydia Philbrick were rather young to be legal guardians of a child Samuel's age. Samuel Philbrick, however, would be Jabez's first apprentice. Samuel trained and worked under Jabez Dodge for about nine years before establishing his own business in Exeter. By 1803, Samuel had married and had seven healthy children. Joseph Philbrick was the middle of three sons who became master potters. Meanwhile, Jabez and Lydia had several children of their own, and most of their sons became potters. At the turn of the century, the Dodgers and Philbricks worked in close proximity in the same neighborhood, carrying on business relationships with each other, raising their children in the pottery tradition.

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5Samuel's father, Benjamin Philbrick, was a blacksmith and died in 1769 when Samuel was ten years of age. Chapman, 24.

6I am grateful to Nancy Merrill, Director of Collections, Exeter Historical Society for supplying information on the Philbrick and Osborn family.
The potters of Exeter were like most other New England craftspeople in the 1700s and early 1800s. Closely related families organized around a craft (fig. 2). From cabinetmakers to silversmiths, in the city and in the country, this behavior was typical of craft businesses. Kinship networks played a vital role in organizing, controlling, and facilitating the transmission of skills, knowledge and capital. As boys, Exeter potters were taught the ability to create something useful (pottery) out of something that would otherwise have little value (red clay) and to sell it effectively in business (literacy, book keeping, etc.). Each would build his own skills inventory, that is, all of the skills and education needed to prosper. Many of these skills were "transferable," allowing individuals to take advantage of diverse economic opportunities and to respond to changing social and economic conditions. The skills inventories of these craftsmen are clues to their backgrounds, training,


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perceived opportunities, needs, and personalities.

Formal schooling had a significant impact on the ancillary skills craftsmen brought to the business of potting. All sons of the Dodge, Philbrick, and Lamson families attended the local Phillips-Exeter academy in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Reverend William Bentley, pastor of the East Church in Salem, Massachusetts visited Exeter in 1801 and was impressed by the academy there. He recorded in his dairy:

Exeter is the place of an Academy which is undoubtedly the most flourishing in New England, & perhaps the best endowed....Exeter Academy at present holds the highest place if not in New England certainly it admits no rival in New Hampshire.

Bentley’s comments are substantiated by his credentials. A graduate of Harvard, Bentley himself was a school teacher and also served a long pastorate. He was a tutor in languages at Harvard and became a famous linguist. The educational backgrounds of craftsmen like Samuel and Joseph Philbrick were essential in the development of their later

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10 ibid, 14.
business careers and personal development. Significantly, access to one of the finest educations available in New England did not deter these young men from the pottery vocation.

After serving an apprenticeship, relocating to different geographical locations in northern New England to establish new, permanent potteries as young adults was part of an effective strategy of dispersing a craft structure across Northern New England. Older sons in their early twenties moved to areas a comfortable distance from Exeter markets while the youngest sons tended to stay at home to eventually take over their fathers' businesses. Jabez Dodge's first two sons moved to urban centers while Samuel Philbrick Sr.'s first two sons (Samuel Jr. and Joseph) moved to a rural area. Both Jabez's and Samuel's youngest sons continued work in Exeter, eventually taking control of their father's businesses. Building a new kiln like those used in Exeter was expensive, but once established, 

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older sons had excellent chances of financial success, and younger family members had potential places to work. Fathers almost certainly supplied the significant amounts of starter capital that sons needed to establish independent potteries.

Sons saw profitable opportunities in supplying pottery, not potatoes, to hungry markets. Literally days after they had reached the age of twenty one, the older Dodge boys, Benjamin and Joseph, relocated to Portland, Maine and Portsmouth, New Hampshire respectively. Unlike the skilled labor of larger American ceramic establishments, migrating Exeter potters did not "tramp" from location to location trying to find work nor did any serve as journeymen, a craft status increasingly exploited after the Revolution in America. While the newer stoneware and refined earthenware ventures were usually backed by

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12 One of the best documented kilns in New England is Jabez Dodge's; it is likely that Samuel and Joseph Philbrick used a similar type in Skowhegan. Norton, figure 5.

entrepreneurial capital and staffed by skilled laborers, Exeter potters could look forward to owning their own shops and controlling all aspects of production and distribution. Benjamin Dodge was the oldest of Exeter’s second generation of potters and the first to leave home to set up a new pottery business in a new place. His success helped establish the strategy used by generations of Exeter potters.

On May 18, 1795, seventeen days after Benjamin Dodge’s twenty-first birthday, an advertisement appeared in the Eastern Herald:

Benjamin Dodge

Informs the public that he carries on the POTTER’S BUSINESS in Maine street, Portland, just above Mr. Stephen Mclellan’s new store, where he will keep constantly for sale the various sorts of EARTHEN WARE. Those who please to favor him with their custom may depend on being supplied whole sale or retail, at the lowest prices.\(^\text{15}\)

Benjamin initially had to rent, perhaps because of the higher costs of living in an urban area, but a booming earthenware business allowed him, at age twenty-seven, to build a home in 1801 that also served as a tavern. It was one of only twenty-six brick dwelling houses in Portland in 1803. He acquired more land and built a new kiln in 1802 or 1803. In 1822, a fire swept through Portland taking twenty buildings, and Benjamin Dodge was among three individuals listed by the *Eastern Argus* "who sustain[ed] the heaviest losses." On his burned property, Dodge erected a new three-story brick residence and tavern, and Portland directories of 1823 and 1827 referred to him as "potter and innholder." Benjamin Jr. took over the pottery and inn in 1836 after his father went insane and committed suicide.\(^\text{16}\) He continued making traditional redware in the

\(^{15}\)Quoted in M. Lelyn Branin, *The Early Potters and Potteries of Maine*, (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), 43. Benjamin Dodge was born on May 1, 1774; ibid.

city over the next forty years, and like his father, worked from a small shop, employing little help. He also took his own life. Perhaps the minds of both father and son succumbed to the toxic glazes they used.¹⁷ Shortly before Benjamin Jr.'s death in 1875, Rufus Lamson and Eben Swasey came to town to make redware, establishing the "Portland Earthen Ware Manufactory." Both were from Exeter, New Hampshire.¹⁸

Establishing the Redware Business in Skowhegan, Maine

Samuel Philbrick, Jr. (fig. 3), Joseph's older brother, migrated to the area now called Skowhegan, Maine at the age of 23.¹⁹ He was Samuel Philbrick Sr.'s oldest son and was trained as a master potter. By the time Samuel

¹⁸ Susan Myers has suggested that potter Daniel Clark of Concord, New Hampshire may have suffered physically from exposure to lead in "The Business of Potting," 192, 194.

¹⁹ The town now called Skowhegan has had numerous and confusing political boundary changes from settlement to the twentieth century. As a matter of convenience, Skowhegan will be used to refer to the area that makes up present-day Skowhegan. The political boundaries are elaborated later in the paper.
Philbrick Jr. came of age, the strategy of establishing redware potteries in new places had been well tested, and undoubtedly, news of the Dodges' successes had traveled back to Exeter. Maine at that time was only a "district" of the state of Massachusetts and did not become a state in its own right until 1820. Before independence, warfare with Native Americans, France, and England hindered economic and population growth. After the Revolution, with the removal of foreign enemies and the promise of cheap open land, American settlers swarmed into the vast territory. Maine's population expanded by 450 percent, from 56,000 in 1783 to some 300,000 in 1820. Samuel Philbrick Jr. was one of these migrators, and one of several family-related Exeter potters on the move to establish new potteries in northern New England. While the

larger urban markets attracted the Dodges, the Philbricks saw a prosperous future in a growing rural town.

Skowhegan is located on the Kennebec river north of Waterville in Somerset County, third largest of Maine’s counties. The small rural town grew and prospered in the first half of the nineteenth century. Samuel Weston wrote to the Maine Legislature in 1833:

The village of Skowhegan Falls, though yet in infancy, has arrived to some importance in a mercantile view. The number of stores has considerably increased, the amount of business has at least doubled within the last five years, and there are numerous mills for the manufacturing of lumber and a very large capital employed in the lumbering business, not only in Skowhegan Falls but in other parts of the County.21

Skowhegan’s ever-changing town boundaries were the result of rapid and complex evolution over the nineteenth century.22 In 1900, an elderly William Philbrick, one of

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22The word "Skowhegan" comes from the area’s first inhabitants, the Abnaki Indians, who applied it to a large island in the center of the Kennebec river (now the town’s center) and water falls just to the north. After the Revolutionary war, English settlers quickly moved to the area, recognizing the power potential of Skowhegan Falls. The area was called Canaan and formally incorporated in 1788. In 1814, the land on the western and southern side of the Kennebec river, including the island, was separated off from Canaan and became Bloomfield. On the northern side of the river, the line dividing the towns of Norridgewock and Canaan bisected the northern portion of
Samuel Philbrick Jr.‘s sons, mused to the town newspaper’s staff that during his lifetime he had lived in three towns, two counties and two states and had always lived in the same house.23

Samuel Philbrick’s move to Skowhegan was planned in advance with Colonel John G. Neil who was a resident of Newmarket, New Hampshire, a town just north of Exeter. According to Skowhegan’s local historian, Louise Helen Coburn, Samuel Philbrick came to Skowhegan in 1808, the same year as John Neil. Neil owned a large tract of land encompassing what later came to be called Neil’s Hill on the Kennebec River. The only land Neil sold from this tract for many years was to Samuel Philbrick. It was a small half-acre lot on the river.24 The deed of April 4, 1810 documenting its purchase for $180 "with the Pot house

the village. In 1823 a section of Canaan immediately opposite Bloomfield on the northern side of the river (between Norridgewock and the old range line near Lake George) was organized as Milburn. Milburn was then renamed to Skowhegan in 1836. The Skowhegan and Bloomfield Village Corporation was created by an Act of Legislature in 1852 and continued in existence for 54 years. In 1861, Bloomfield and Skowhegan were formally united, the whole taking the name of the latter.

23The towns were Canaan, then Milburn, and Skowhegan. The counties were Kennebec, then Somerset. It was not until 1820, as part of the Missouri Compromise, that Maine became a state, separating from Massachusetts. "Seventy-one Years Ago." Independent Reporter (11 October 1900).

24Coburn, 697.
"thereon" was probably a formal execution of a previous agreement. Neil may have helped Philbrick construct his "pot house." It was located next to a small stream running off the Kennebec which was likely used to power Philbrick's pug mill.

The first documented land Samuel Philbrick purchased in Skowhegan, however, was from Daniel Steward. In 1809 he spent $301.28 for a tract of land "on the North side of Kennebec River near Skowhegan Falls." This was where his house was located, not far from the "pot house." As part

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25 Coburn, 697, 99, 686. John G. Neil to Samuel Philbrick, April 4, 1810. Somerset County Register of Deeds, Somerset County Court House, Skowhegan, Maine, Book 13, p. 295. Neil migrated to Skowhegan in 1808 and was thought to perhaps be a potter himself. Ibid., 696. However, an account book on file at the Skowhegan History House suggests that Neil was a carpenter.

26 Pug mills were mechanical devices used to grind and mix clay to an even consistency and remove air bubbles. In operation, they resembled traditional mills except grinding stones were not used. Instead, a central spindle with horizontal, angled blades was used, working on the same principle an airplane propeller does when it moves air by its motion. A large tub, usually made by a cooper, held the unmixed clay. Clay was pressed downwards and extruded at the tub's base. Peter C. D. Brears, The English Country Pottery: Its History and Techniques. Devon, United Kingdom: David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1971), 92-94. Joseph Philbrick is one of two redware potters documented to have used water power in Maine. Schedule 5, Products of Industry, United States Decennial Census for 1850 and 1860.

27 Daniel Steward to Samuel Philbrick, July 3 1809, Somerset County Register of Deeds, Somerset County Court House, Skowhegan, Maine, Book 2, Page 40.
of the establishment strategy employed by Exeter potters, young Samuel Philbrick came to Skowhegan with significant amounts of investment capital. By 1810, he had spent a total of $481.28 on two property transactions alone. This was not a small amount as a comparison to wage rates shows. Twenty years later, in the early 1830s, Joseph Philbrick charged his neighbors $1.25 per day for labor. Thus, the money Samuel spent on land by age 25 was roughly equivalent to 385 days of paid labor in the 1830s.

No record of the pottery’s construction or cost survives. However, an inventory of a redware potter from Hallowell, a town just south of Skowhegan on the Kennebec River, dates to about the same time Samuel Philbrick was getting started and provides an idea of what some of his costs were in establishing a redware business in Maine. An inventory was made of Edmund Dana’s estate in 1810 after he had hanged himself, leaving a wife and ten children intestate. A local contemporary, the midwife Martha Ballard, noted in her dairy that he had tried to kill himself the week before by cutting his throat.

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29Branin, The Early Potters and Potteries of Maine, 121-22; Charles Elventon Nash, The History of Augusta, First Settlements and Early Days as a Town, Including the
Dana had a house, barn, and "kilnhouse" all located within his property of one hundred feet (six rods) by about two hundred sixty-four feet (sixteen rods). Pottery shops were often located in the same area as the potter's house. Dana's estate inventory of October 15, 1810 included among other valuations:

1 Lot of land in Hallowell together with the late Dwelling house of the Deceased with the other buildings thereon, said lot containing about half an acre of land, and is situated on Winthrop street
$1,500.00

Potters Mill & Turning Wheel 5.00
Old Wheelbarrow .50 2 old horse sleds 1.50 2.00
Lot of Hemlock wood 8.00
About 40 dz unbak'd Milk Pans .25 10.00
" 40 dz Pots unbak'd .25 10.00
" 8 dz Jugs .12 .96
" 7 dz Bowls .06 .42
" 8 dz Pudding Pans .12 .96
" 6 dz Chamber Pots .17 -- 6 dz unbak'd Do.12 1.74
Iron Pot & head staff .50 Axe & Trowell .20 .70
Old Ware on hand say 5 5.00
2 old Bowls .50 -- 1 1/2 Cord Wood 7.50 8.00
Horse Cart & Geer $8 Horse $30 -- Cow $15 53.00
Potters Mill & Turning Machine $5 5.00

Diary of Mrs. Martha Moore Ballard, 1785-1812, (Farmington, M.E.: Knowlton, McLeary & Company, 1893), 456; Robert R. McCausland and Cynthia MacAlman McCausland eds. The Diary of Martha Ballard, 1785-1812 (Camden, ME: Picton Press, 1992), 813. In addition to potting, Dana had served prominently in Hallowell's town affairs. The reasons for Dana's suicide are not known, but as noted above, the Dodges in Portland were also suicidal. The effects of working with large amounts of lead could have been a factor.


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As the large amount of "unbak'd" ware indicates, Dana was actively engaged in the pottery business right up to the end of his life. The listing of his pottery making materials approximates some of the costs Samuel Philbrick faced in establishing a pottery business in Skowhegan. The actual cost of the equipment needed to turn and glaze pottery ("mill" and "turning wheel") was not very significant, but the kiln and fuel used to "bake" the pots as well as the means of transporting them (horse and carts, etc.) could be substantial. Lead, the primary ingredient for the glaze, could be expensive and is not reflected in the inventory, perhaps explaining why so much pottery remained "unbak'd."32

Samuel Philbrick not only brought starter capital and the ability to make pottery to Skowhegan, but also a well developed knowledge of accounting and business. Upon arrival, he immediately put his education of hands and mind to work, not only making pottery and establishing a network of customers but also negotiating a place in the town's

31On the importance of transportation in commerce in New England in the early 1800s, see Jack Larkin, 218-21; Roger Parks, Roads and Travel in New England, 1790-1840, (Sturbridge, MA: Old Sturbridge Village, 1967).

32Potter Daniel Clark of Concord, New Hampshire often had to travel twenty miles or more to acquire lead in the early 1800s. Susan Meyers, "The Business of Potting," 192.
business and political structure. Long-term face-to-face marketing of his wares in the small geographic area facilitated the consolidation of a sphere of influence that benefited more than just his pottery enterprise. He became active in town government. He served as a Justice of the Peace from at least 1822 to 1835, and Joseph appears to have acted as his clerk. Samuel Philbrick became a Selectman in 1828 and was reelected to the position from 1829 to 1836 and from 1839 to 1841. He was Town Clerk from 1830 to 1836 and from 1839 to 1841.

Samuel Philbrick utilized another craft, that of accounting, to reach economic levels not possible in the pottery business alone. These accounting skills, in fact, were "transferable" to all of his business enterprises, including earthenware production. He helped form the West Skowhegan Aqueduct Company in 1836 for "managing the water conveyed to the buildings we now own and occupy in the Town of Skowhegan," and served as treasurer for thirty years.

before his son, William, took over his position. He became active in banking. In March of 1833, a small group of Skowhegan’s leading businessmen organized the Skowhegan Bank. Samuel Weston was elected President and Samuel Philbrick Cashier. Seven directors formed the rest of the bank’s administration, among them John G. Neil and Abner Coburn, future governor of the State of Maine. In addition to these various employments, he speculated in local land and became by the 1850s and 1860s one of the wealthiest men in town. Some referred to him as "Squire Philbrick" and legal documents listed him as "Gentleman" and "Esquire" which were as much reflections of his economic status as his many occupations. Samuel married

\[34\text{Coburn, 286.}\]

\[35\text{For a longer discussion of the establishment of banking in Skowhegan, see Coburn, 118-128. Philbrick's accounting capabilities are supported by the fact that he helped steer the bank through the Panic of 1837, a crisis that was apparently devastating to the bank's president, Samuel Weston. In 1851, the bank was in a healthy state of affairs as a committee report of the Skowhegan Bank in William Philbrick's papers at the Skowhegan History shows. It lists Samuel's cashier's salary as $450 dollars.}\]

\[36\text{Census records for 1850 show that Samuel Philbrick had $10,000 in land and a total estate of $13,850 in 1860. In 1860, the census records his occupation as "gentleman." Skowhegan Census for 1850, Microcopy 432, Roll 268. Skowhegan Census for 1860, Microcopy 653, Roll 452; both are at the National Archives, Washington, D.C. On July 14, 1860 James Fellows recorded in his diary that "Squire Philbrick bought John's house." James Fellows was living with his sister, Lucy Fellows Philbrick (wife of George Philbrick, Samuel Philbrick's son). Elise White Fellows,}\]
Betsey White shortly after beginning the pottery business and eventually had thirteen children. After they grew to adulthood, he settled many of them around him on the original tract of land he had purchased from Colonel John G. Neil.37

After Samuel took over the Cashier position at the bank, he turned over to his younger brother, Joseph, the pottery business that had already served Skowhegan for almost 25 years. On May 1, 1833 Joseph Philbrick began a daybook recording his own business transactions, most related to pottery. He would continue making redware as his primary occupation for another 41 years.

Joseph Philbrick and Skowhegan

When Samuel Philbrick Jr. left Exeter for Skowhegan in 1808, Joseph was only a boy of 11. But he would follow his brother about 12 years later. For Joseph, the move was a conservative act of limited possibilities. It may even have been a disappointment. He must have imagined what the

"Extracts from the James Fellows Diaries, 1860 and 1861," Typescript on file, Skowhegan History House (January 1926), 5. Special thanks are in order to Senator Samuel W. Philbrick of Seattle Washington for providing genealogical information on the Philbrick family.

37Coburn, 686-87. Descendents of the Samuel Philbrick family continue to reside in Skowhegan.
possibilities might have been in a growing new town, owning his own business. But for Joseph's father, who was now in his early 50s and still making pottery in Exeter, the starter capital given to Samuel Jr. back in the early 1800s was stretched to include Joseph as well. By 1820, Skowhegan's pottery business supported two potters. Joseph would not gain control of the pottery for another 13 years. As a result, Joseph Philbrick never attained the economic and social standing of Samuel Philbrick. His place in Skowhegan's community was not insubstantial, however.

For most of his life, Joseph lived in that part of Skowhegan village known as Bloomfield. He served as a Selectman from 1837 to 1838, in 1844, and from 1849 to 1850. He was the town clerk from 1846 to 1850. In a deed of 1835, he was listed as "Esquire, Treasurer of Said County of Somerset." He was an ensign in the local militia in 1823 and served the rank of Captain from 1824 to

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38Admittedly, this conclusion is speculative. More research needs to be conducted on craft dispersal strategies and what craftsmen perceived as ideal conditions for starting a business. However, migration patterns of other redware potters suggest that they perceived the advantages of going to growing towns where demand was high, competition was low, and they could control their own potteries.


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1828. Many referred to him in documents as "Capt. Joseph Philbrick." In the 1850 census, his real estate was valued at $1,700 while his total estate was listed in 1860 as $4,200. Compared to other listings in the Skowhegan and Bloomfield censuses, Joseph Philbrick appears to have been comfortably situated in the middle ranks of his community.

Joseph was a respected member and leader in the working community. According to William R.G. Estes, Joseph was "a well known Royal Arch Mason for years and active in Masonic work." In 1864, the Somerset Chapter, No. 15, Royal Arch Masons received its charter and was the only Masonic organization in Somerset County at the time. Although Samuel Philbrick was a charter member, he never held office. Joseph, on the other hand, "was an important factor in the organization, being the first High Priest"--the top position. Under Joseph’s leadership, the organization grew, drawing its membership from "the flourishing town of Skowhegan and thriving towns near by."41

40Bloomfield Census for 1850, Somerset County, Microcopy 432, Roll 269; Bloomfield Census for 1860, Microcopy 653, Roll 452; both are at the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

While Samuel Philbrick derived revenue through considerable occupational diversification, mixed household production characterized Joseph Philbrick's supplemental income strategies. Revenue recorded by Philbrick in his daybook indicates that pottery making was his primary occupation. Listings in business directories show that he worked as a potter up until his death in 1874.42 The second most important source of income came from the production of textiles. Compared to these, agricultural revenue was minor (fig. 4). In fact, Philbrick took in more agricultural produce as credit than he sold or traded away. Home textile production for Philbrick's wife and three daughters was an important source of revenue, as it was for many women in Maine. According to Clarence Day, of all the different types of household production in Maine in the early nineteenth century, the manufacture of textiles was the most important from a commercial standpoint.43

42Philbrick is listed as owner of Skowhegan's pottery in the 1873-1874 issue of the Maine State Yearbook and Legislative Manual and in the 1874-1875 issue of the Maine Business Directory; Branin, 169.

In Joseph's household, both husband and wife worked. Children supported the household in various ways as well. The Philbrick women produced a significant amount of family revenue from sheeting, ticking, drilling, broad cloth, cassimere, and some sewing. Sheet ing was by far their most important product, selling over 5000 yards over the course of the daybook. Because these products were recorded in Philbrick's daybook, it is likely they were part of ungendered channels of commerce. However, an argument has been made of the "existence of a separate female economy existing beneath the level of traditional documentation" in early America because of the lack of evidence for women's names and work in male diaries and ledgers.44 But Philbrick's daybook contains significant evidence of women's work, especially in his own household. Rather than keeping separate accounts reflective of separate economies, Joseph kept a single account book reflective of a mutually dependent and productive household unit.45 Although


45Similar conclusions on the nature of household production are found in Thomas Hubka, Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn: The Connected Farm Buildings of
women's names appear much less frequently than men's, products of female labor such as butter, cheese, baskets, and textiles are common. Joseph's wife was not incapable of keeping her own accounts. Her accounts as Treasurer and Secretary of the Bloomfield Maternal Association survive.\textsuperscript{46} Philbrick's account book suggests that many women's products were valued in a diverse marketplace and that they circulated relatively freely in the local economy. Household composition, therefore, is an important factor when analyzing the accounts of craftsmen. They can reveal revenue production by more than one person.

There were many other minor types of revenue producing activities recorded in the daybook which reflect aspects of Joseph's skills inventory. For example, Joseph derived

\textsuperscript{46}Paulina Philbrick. Account Book and Papers of the Maternal Association of Bloomfield, 1848-1857. Ms. on file, Skowhegan History House, Skowhegan, Maine.
additional income from hanging wall paper and painting houses. Charges such as those made in September of 1836 to Edmond Pearson for "painting in house" ($4.50) and in August of 1837 to John Kerswell for "papering parlour" ($2.50) indicate that Joseph was skilled in these areas. Joseph also charged others for fence posting, "writing," and hauling. Some minor merchant activity appears, and a considerable variety of goods were recorded as both credits and debits. Large quantities of goods were related to building activities. These included nails of many sizes, shingles, boards, hinges, glass panes, posts, and clapboards. Foodstuffs such as sugar, cinnamon, ginger, cayenne, bacon, flour, lard, honey, and nutmeg traded frequently, as did dairy products and various types of meats. General goods traded were a diverse lot, including tools of various sorts, bees wax, soap, a tea kettle, oil, lead, baskets, leather, measures, a wheel barrow, lime, a few books, rennet, brooms, tallow, and umbrellas. While tea and coffee appear with regular frequency, liquor appears in only one transaction, a good indication that Joseph had little to do with intoxicating beverages. His daybook on May 25, 1840 contains a record of 25 cents lent to Joseph Cushing for a "contribution at Temperance lecture."
Joseph and Samuel Philbrick’s economic context in terms of mixed household production and occupational diversification is essential to understanding the nature of the pottery business in Skowhegan. Careful planning, training, and organization helped make pottery a source of revenue for the Philbricks in Skowhegan for almost 70 years. A complex set of acquired skills allowed Joseph and Samuel to adapt to changing economic conditions and perceived opportunities. Neither the Philbricks, nor any of the other Exeter potters, fit the simplistic mold historians have created for red earthenware producers. They were not farmers who merely made pottery to supplement their incomes. Certainly there were many earthenware makers who were involved in agriculture, but diversification could and often did take other forms.

Rural craftsmen cannot automatically be assumed to be farmers. Nor can members of craftsmen’s families—wives, children, and servants—be ruled out as significant producers of household income.

Historical studies of regions or communities can go only so far in measuring the complexity of rural trade and work. By focusing on the material and written evidence of individuals, we come to a fuller understanding of traditional craft labor in the nineteenth century. Account books are among the most powerful and detailed sources of
evidence available on individual producers. However, their interpretation and use as historical evidence pose special challenges, the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter 3
ACCOUNTING FOR THE POTTERY BUSINESS

The study of accounts kept by craftsmen can be richly rewarding, revealing extraordinary amounts of historical information about the working lives of ordinary people who rarely appear prominently in written records. They present certain challenges, however. Separating patterns from personalities is often difficult. On the one hand, they reflect the unique people who kept them, filled with indications of personal idiosyncrasies. The information contained in the miscellaneous symbols and abbreviations making up a personal accounting style, for example, can be quite valuable when decoded. On the other hand, account books had a public domain and were shaped by communal expectations. In fact, they represented trading agreements enforceable by law. In the broadest sense, then, accounts are reflections of the time, location, and particular culture in question.

Joseph Philbrick's account book conveys a rich tapestry of personal and household economic production, not just evidence of a single craft. It records a wide spectrum of tasks and products traded and sold in his
community, but documents only a small portion of the intricacies of everyday economic life. His account book is not a diary, even of his business.\textsuperscript{1} There are virtually no records of the processes of pottery making itself. Nor does the account book record favors, gifts, or community service. His account book is a compilation of encrypted economic encounters chronologically recorded, the meaning of which must be unlocked. As one historian has written, "account books are highly individualized and troublesome in their detail. So complex are they that they defy casual use and only reluctantly release information to systematic analysis."\textsuperscript{2}

For almost thirty years, Philbrick kept records in a type of account book known as a daybook. Daybooks were among the most common types of account books kept by craftsmen. This type of record keeping device listed transactions with individual people in chronological order on a daily basis. Ledgers, on the other hand, ordered transactions by customer. In both types of account books, all goods and services were given precise monetary values. Sometimes, transactions recorded in a daybook were

\textsuperscript{1}For an example of a redware potter's diary that records his business, see Daniel Clark, \textit{Diary}, 1789-1828. New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire.

\textsuperscript{2}Bowen, 164.
transcribed to ledgers. Ledgers divide one side of the page for a customer’s debts (or one page left of the book’s binding) and the other for his or her credits. Using a two book system composed of a daybook and ledger is called double entry bookkeeping. The books are usually linked by a number recorded next to a person’s name in the daybook. This number corresponds to a numbered page in the ledger book that contains the individual’s entire account.3 There are no such numbers in Philbrick’s daybook, indicating that he used only one daybook. Use of one account book was common for many craftsmen.

Joseph Philbrick’s daybook has several qualities that make it particularly appropriate for in-depth study. Philbrick’s habitual recording of prices in both the English system (pounds, shillings, and pence) and the American system of currency greatly aids analysis by providing comparative data. Continuing this manner of pricing throughout the entire daybook attests to how

3There are many types of account books, but most can be divided into the two classes of ledgers and daybooks. See Robert J. Wilson III, "Early American Account Books: Interpretation, Cataloguing, and Use," American Association for State and Local History Technical Leaflet 140, History News, 36, no. 9 (September 1981), unpaginated. Also Yolanda Van de Krol, "Records of Distribution," (April 1993), typescript on file with the author, and Class Presentation, Winterthur Program in Early American Culture (April 1993). Many thanks to Yolanda Van de Krol for providing this typescript.
useful the English monetary system continued to be in communal conceptualizations of price. Other characteristics that make the study of the daybook helpful are its condition and legibility. Both can have a significant impact on statistical analysis. Joseph Philbrick's daybook is remarkably clear and legible, displaying an elegant writing style associated with higher education levels. Many old account books have had pages ripped out and some were turned into scrap books. Joseph Philbrick's daybook, however, is complete, in excellent condition, with no pages missing, and highly legible. Although a rare survival, the daybook reflects accounting practices common with literate craftsmen working in the 1700s and 1800s.

Joseph Philbrick recorded transactions in his daybook during the prime of his business life, from age 36 to 65. But he never recorded the totality of his economic transactions. For example, of all the entries in the daybook, 82.5 percent are debits. These were records of goods or services for which he charged other people. The rest were credits, that is, things other people charged

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4Richard L. Bushman, The Refinement of America (New York: Knopf, 1992; New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 92-96. "Writing" was a marketable skill in Skowhegan. Philbrick was occasionally hired to "write" for area businesses and also prepared writs and legal documents.

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him. In modern accounting practice this would suggest an overextension of credit. However, Philbrick followed the custom of having many of the people he did business with record his debts in their own account books. This practice was common in New England. When Joseph did record what other people charged him (credits), he often only wrote the name of the person, the date, and the credited item without a price or quantity. When he recorded debits, on the other hand, a price was almost always listed. 

The partial nature of Joseph Philbrick’s daybook may be shown by first considering a graphic representation of Philbrick’s yearly revenue recorded in the daybook’s complete years, 1834 to 1861. Revenue derived from the sale of pottery and from all other sources are distinguished (fig. 5). There would be certain pitfalls in using this evidence alone. For example, one may try to use this data to get an idea of Philbrick’s business productivity by comparing wage to revenue rates. The average rate recorded in the daybook for a day’s labor was $1.25. Philbrick rarely sold anything on Sunday and

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pottery sold year round, despite Maine’s frigid winters. So, a total of 313 possible working days a year at $1.25 would produce an income of $391.25. For thirteen years, therefore, the Philbrick family earned above this revenue level and for fifteen years they were below it.6 One might conclude that after weathering the troubled years following the Panic of 1837, overall business was relatively good up to 1850, and then went flat. This would be incorrect.

By comparing what is written in the daybook to other historical sources of revenue information, a clearer understanding emerges of the nature of Joseph Philbrick’s business methods. In 1850 and 1860, Philbrick reported to takers of the Manufacturing Census that his pottery was producing annually $800 and $1000 respectively.7 Yet these revenue figures are much higher than those recorded in the daybook (fig. 6). We find that Philbrick’s daybook records a mere 14 percent of his total pottery revenues in 1850. In 1860, this proportion rose just slightly to 20 percent. The highest total pottery sales for a single year were recorded in the daybook in 1843, and these were

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6No claim is made here of what this level meant in terms of a standard of living. It is used only as a rough yardstick.

7Schedule 5, Products of Industry, United States Decennial Census for 1850 and 1860.
not even half of the revenue reported to the manufacturing
census of 1860. What might explain this disparity? If
such a low proportion of transactions were recorded, why
were they recorded in the first place? What were the
qualities that warranted the recording of a transaction?
What, finally, was the purpose of Joseph Philbrick’s
daybook? The answers to these questions are not easy.

Very little scholarship has addressed these issues.
However, Myron O. Stachiw and Jack Larkin have considered
the impact of increasing cash supplies, spurred by the
expansion of banking and the spread of factories and wage
labor, on New England accounting practice and economic
life in the nineteenth century. As households began to
conduct more and more economic transactions in cash, they
became less firmly bound to the kinds of reciprocal
obligations bolstered by account books. Stachiw found in
his analysis of the blacksmithing accounts of Emerson
Bixby of the Barre Four Corners neighborhood in Barre,
Massachusetts that cash transactions over time tended to erode the amount of recorded business revenue, not actual business volume. Although Bixby’s business accounts show a marked decline on income in the 1840s, Stachiw finds that this was more a result of accounting practice than actual business activity. He suggests that cash in immediate payment for goods and services made the recording of economic transactions in account books unnecessary. As cash became more and more common through the 1840s and 1850s, Bixby’s accounts show a steady decline in the number and value of recorded transactions. Revenue recorded in Bixby’s account book gives the false impression that his business declined to meager levels over time. Cash income, Stachiw suggests, was increasingly not recorded, and as a result, a disparity developed between recorded and actual business revenue. Bixby’s total activity cannot be determined from the account book alone.

The pattern of cash transactions involving both credit and debt recorded over time in Philbrick’s daybook is complicated (fig. 7). This figure illustrates both frequencies as well as values of cash transactions appearing in the daybook. When compared to the patterns

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10 Stachiw, "Capitalism, Commerce, and Self-improvement."
of revenue recorded in the daybook (fig. 5), there appears, in fact, to be a kind of rough correlation between the occurrence of cash and recorded economic activity, with the exception of the years 1842-1845. The highest levels of recorded cash appear during one of the highest periods of recorded revenue, from 1846 to 1849 (compare figures 7 and 5). Increasing cash levels, nonetheless, help to explain part of the great disparity between what Philbrick records in his daybook and what he reports to census takers. During the nineteenth century, new levels of cash in New England’s economy lubricated the flow of economic transactions in an unprecedented way, transforming goods and services into a universally accepted and precisely measurable medium. The effects of increased amounts of cash, however, may not fully explain the problem of Joseph Philbrick’s record-keeping. The key to the problem resides in understanding how Joseph Philbrick actually used his daybook.

As noted previously, records of credit—records of Joseph’s indebtedness to others—make up a small proportion of the daybook. The daybook, therefore, was not a record of credits and debts designed to keep track of a precise economic position at any one time. The purpose of Joseph’s daybook becomes clearer when it is compared to Joshua Whitman’s journals kept during the
first half of the nineteenth century. Joshua Whitman (1776-1856) lived in Turner, Maine about forty miles from Skowhegan and was a contemporary of Joseph Philbrick. Whitman kept journals of his life for a variety of reasons--to understand his life, to track his farm business and family finances, and to preserve his life in writing as an example for others. He helped ensure the latter by writing letters to Ezekiel Holmes, editor of the Maine Farmer, who in turn published several of them. In one letter published on November 7, 1840, Whitman states:

Mr. Holmes, let it be understood I began on my farm in the woods, with only a bushed out road, but little traveled, and only by a few settlers. Records made of cutting down trees, chopping and piling logs, cannot be very interesting to your subscribers. I began about half a century ago to keep a journal and laid it by as a simple and foolish concern, but was sorry I had not continued it. The first day of January, 1800, I determined as simple as it was, I would put down the weather, my out-goings and incomings, and go ahead, and from that time to the present I have made records everyday.¹¹

On May 16, 1840, his published letter indicates why he kept track of his "out-goings and incomings":

I am satisfied that it would urge the necessity of well doing for a person to write down at night his out-goings and incomings, for himself and others to see and read afterwards....keeping records leads to industry and morality.¹²


His recommendation of the maintenance of such records reflects the wave of agricultural reform that swept over New England and Maine in the antebellum period. This movement grew out of concerns over declining agricultural competitiveness.¹³ Joshua Whitman’s journals, therefore, were intended for much more than his business activities.

Joshua Whitman’s journal entry of January 5 and 6, 1809 gives insight into the complexity of daily economic transactions and how a redware potter fit into them:

Thurs. Jan. 5. Cloudy and begins to snow in the P.M. I rode down to Jesse Bradford’s mill and carried about 1 bushll of wheat and 1 of corn. Settled with B. Swacey. was credited at Blossom and Leonard’s Store for 1 iron bason 3s. paid Nathan Cole 5 1/2 lb. flax and took a receipt in full. Sold J. Leavitt Innholder 2 lb. flax. he paid me cash 2s. paid to Dr. Cary 5 Dol. and lodged at Father Gorhams. Friday Jan. 6. Pleasant. I settled with Seth Staples. Paid him 12/6 by way of Revd. J. Strickland brown ware. Bot 3 bowls of Reuben Thorp¹⁴ and agreed to give him a lb. of flax. Brought home my cloth that J. Hadley has been pressing and went into the wood of slead shoes.¹⁵

¹³Hubka, 200-04; Cohen, 50.

¹⁴In 1802 Reuben Thorp (1773-1823) established a redware business in Turner and died in 1823 from "cholic." Among other things, Thorp’s inventory listed "Two two-quart bowls Brown Earthen $0.25, three one-quart Bowls Brown Earthen $0.18, and Three pint Bowls Brown Earthen $0.12." No identified ware made by Thorp survives. Inventory of Reuben Thorp, Probate Records, Oxford County Court House, South Paris, Maine. Branin, The Early Potters and Potteries of Maine, 85, 87.

¹⁵Quoted in Cohen, 51.
For comparison, a typical entry in Joseph Philbrick’s daybook was made October 6, 1856:

James H. Fogg Dr.
To 9 Pans @ 9d 2 do @ $0.10 $1.32
2 Pots @ 1/- Cov’d do 1/6 $0.58
$1.9016

The brevity of Philbrick’s entries is a telling clue to their purpose.

Philbrick was primarily interested in recording the amount of money people owed him. His daybook functioned as an instrument for recording debt. If Philbrick recorded a customer’s payment, it was almost always when a customer either overpaid or underpaid, so often the case with barter. Cash, however, was not something people overpaid with. Philbrick’s transaction with Mrs. Smith on June 20, 1843 was typical:

Mrs. Smith dr
To ware $7.12
Cr. baskets $4.92
and butter $0.36 $5.28.17

The remaining balance was probably paid at a latter date. The "//" made by Philbrick next to nearly every name in the daybook was almost certainly his way of recording that people did in fact clear their debts. Thus, a possible

16"Dr." was an abbreviation for "debit" or "debtor."

17"Cr." was an abbreviation for "credit" or "creditor."
scenario for the transaction with Mrs. Smith may have been something like the following.

On June 20, 1843, Mrs. Smith purchases from Joseph a large portion of pottery (the specific forms of which are unknown) and trades some baskets and butter as a down payment, leaving a balance of $1.84. This transaction is written down in the daybook. Later (we have no way of knowing when), she comes back with, say, more butter and some cash to balance off her debt of $1.84. Philbrick then puts two short parallel lines looking like "//" next to Mrs. Smith's name in the original transaction of June 20 to show that she had cleared her debt, never bothering to record the butter and cash.

Over several years, in fact, Philbrick extended a total of $19.25 of credit to Mrs. Smith. If all of the "//"'s by her entries are taken as evidence of paying her balances, then she paid Philbrick the total amount she borrowed from him. If they are not, Smith paid him back only $7.65, or 40 percent of her debts. Of all the entries in his daybook, Mrs. Smith's included, only 17.5 percent of the payments made by customers, whether cash or barter, are written out in long fashion. Assuming the "//"'s are taken as evidence of payment, almost every listed debt was paid. Here was a simple and effective method of keeping track of debt with one book.
The main function of Philbrick's daybook, therefore, was not to record all of the day-to-day sales, or, to use Joshua Whitman's words, "out-goings and incomings." Rather, it was for those sales where a record of debt was needed. Clumsy barter transactions between neighbors would have logically encouraged the need. Cash, being precisely measurable in cents and universally accepted, discouraged it. A ton of hay could be converted to coins, carried in a pocket to the nearest town, and traded for pottery in a matter of seconds. This was the magic of cash and craftsmen wanted it. As the principle agent in producing, distributing, and collecting the revenues from his products, Joseph Philbrick intimately knew the condition of his business. Recording every pottery transaction was neither necessary nor desirable. That is not to say, however, that Philbrick did not examine his book to help keep track of the 840 people and businesses he traded with. He needed a book to keep track of all of the credit he extended.

The amount of credit varied from person to person and business to business. Extending credit involved issues of risk and trust. Extending credit could enhance profits by facilitating purchases, but it had to be managed. Businesses and craftsmen could count on the local arm of the judicial system to force payment from defaulters.
because records of debt in account books were actually contracts between creditors and debtors that were enforceable by law. On April 8, 1834 Samuel Philbrick, as Justice of the Peace, fined Esau Savage and ordered payment to Samuel Soule for a "Balance on acct. in his Ledger $20.00."\(^{18}\) Writing in 1849 of a successful cooper in Norridgewock (a town that originally encompassed part of present day Skowhegan), William Allen said of John Ware: "In the collection of his debts he sometimes exercised the authority of law with rigorous severity; but extended the utmost leniency to debtors whom he believed to be honest, and well disposed to him and his measures."\(^{19}\)

The local arm of justice could stretch only so far to enforce payment. The severity of law lost power the farther one moved away geographically. Thus, it is not surprising that Joseph Philbrick's daybook portrays a business tangled in local webs of credit and debt. Barbara Gorely Teller, for example, found twice as many resident as nonresident customers in the account book of Weston, Massachusetts redware potter Abraham Hews I.\(^{20}\)

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\(^{18}\)Writ, April 8, 1834. William Philbrick papers, Skowhegan History House, Skowhegan, Maine.


\(^{20}\)Teller, 252.
a study of account books from Suffield Connecticut, transactions involving animal husbandry were so local that Joanne Bowen concluded that subsistence was "a community event." Credit was simply not the domain of the Johny-come-lately, untrustworthy or stranger. A well-puffed pocket book or an even trade, however, were never denied. Undoubtedly, a good portion of the affordable pottery Philbrick sold never needed to be recorded, both in-town and out-of-town.

Joshua Whitman reveals rare insight into a business world filled with strangers and unknown customers that New England craftsmen and farmers undoubtedly depended on for business:

January 12, 1809: I rode into Portland and sold my Load. Sold butter for 10 cents per lb. Tallow for 8 cents per lb. Linnen rags for 3 cents per lb. bot salt. gave 9s per bushell. 4s.6d. per gallon for molasses. 4s.6d. for gallon of new rum. 1s.6d. per oz. for Indigo. 12s. per quintal of fish. Lent cash 1 Dol. to John Bonney and rode home as far as Maj. Cobb’s in Gray. 13 January 1809: I paid cash at Cobb’s 19 cents. paid 3 cents at Phelp’s Store in Minot for 1 glass rum; 10 cents at Clark’s Store for 1 gill of rum and a piece of Tobacco, lent Haley 8 cents, and returned home. There is extensive evidence of business travel in Philbrick’s daybook and several customers lived in nearby

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21 Bowen, 170.

22 Quoted in Cohen, 56.
towns. Louise Helen Coburn notes in *Skowhegan on the Kennebec* that "Joseph Philbrick used to drive to nearby towns with a supply of pottery to exchange at corner stores or farm-houses for goods or farm produce." Philbrick derived a significant amount of income by providing transportation in his wagon ("wagoning") and also had a sleigh to get around in the snow. He charged Isaac Steward $1.50 in the winter of 1841 for "use of old pung for 50 miles at 3d. per M[ile]" and paid $20.00 for a new sleigh five years later. He occasionally paid others to convey and perhaps sell his ware out-of-town. For example, he paid William Blackden $1.50 in 1840 for "hauling ware to Anson."

Of the thousands of transactions recorded in Philbrick's daybook, all but two have names listed. The anonymous had no place there, but they did have a place in Joseph's business. Documentary evidence of these vital customers is extremely rare, and their presence can only be assumed in most cases. But one particular encounter recorded by Joshua Whitman in his journal deserves note.  

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23Coburn, 698. Louise Coburn (1856-1949) grew up in Skowhegan and knew Joseph's daughters. She may have even known Joseph himself. She was age twenty four when Joseph died in 1874. Regardless, Joseph’s daughters gave her information about their father’s business activities. See, for example, the story Anna (Arianna) relayed about Joseph’s involvement in the Underground Railroad, 403-4.
It provides rare insight into the mental evaluation that must have taken place regularly with unknown customers:

February 10, 1809: I paid the said man 20 cents too much in change... Said man call'd his name James Frost. he said he lived at New gloucester seven miles this side of Esqr. Foxcroft. he is middle size. about 20 years old. light complexion. he was rather meanly dressed. His mitten very much patch with divers colors. his horse was rather grey... I did not much suspect him then. if I had I should have been more perticular. 24

If there was a disadvantage to the use of cash, this was it.

A rich, undocumented economic world existed in Skowhegan, Maine and wherever else Philbrick traded in the nineteenth century. A pottery business not in decline but in a state of health is determined not from Philbrick's daybook but from the manufacturing censuses of the nineteenth century. Philbrick did not use his daybook to try to get an idea of how well his business was doing or what products were selling best. Of the pottery recorded as sold between the years of 1834 and 1860, 69 percent was described only as "ware," devoid of reference to any particular forms. 25 This is only understandable in the context of the purpose of Philbrick's daybook. The overriding concern was to record and manage debt, not the

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24Quoted in Cohen, 55.

25Teller has found a similar pattern in the daybook of redware potter Abraham Hews I who lists the majority of pottery sold simply as "ware," 250-51.
product. Pottery sales recorded in the daybook were the domain of the credit worthy, accounting for only a small portion of a much larger business.
Chapter 4
MAKING THE REDWARE BUSINESS PROFITABLE

On May 25, 1860 Skowhegan's redware potter, now sixty-three years old, wrote down the day's business transactions that needed to be recorded, namely, those involving the exchange of credit and debt. He charged E. Ayers & Co. $8.03 for "ware as pr. bill." He credited Melzar Cushing $0.80 for 16 pounds of fresh veal. And finally, J.W. Weston was charged $0.84 for six pans. Philbrick wrote these transactions in a daybook which now contained thousands in chronological order spanning 27 years. This day's transactions were typical of many others written in daybooks. Some days contained more entries. Others had none. In isolation, the meanings of May 25's transactions are obscure. But when considered with a large numbers of similar transactions, patterns may be delineated that can reveal a great deal about the nature of the earthenware business in nineteenth-century rural New England. The challenge is to place this

1"Ware as per bill." Although Philbrick often recorded bills which themselves probably listed specific pottery forms and prices, none are known to exist.

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evidence into the larger context of his working world. The first chapter examined the organizational strategies Joseph and other Exeter potters employed to make redware production feasible. This chapter focuses on the customer’s end of Philbrick’s business. It examines some fundamental consumption patterns discovered in Philbrick’s daybook which give insight into how red earthenware production remained viable in nineteenth-century New England. It identifies the most significant types of pottery in Philbrick’s product mix and analyzes the needs and wants these objects filled. It begins with the interpretation of some simple patterns found in the daybook and then moves to increasingly complex ones.

From the start, Philbrick’s accounting behavior, the subject of Chapter 3, significantly impacted the kinds of analysis used in this chapter. Although Philbrick ended up identifying well over 14,000 pieces of pottery over the course of his daybook, they still constitute only a small fraction of his overall output—records of occasional specificity pertaining to those customers of good credit standing. Placing the pottery sales of May 25, 1860 in the context of all pottery sales recorded for that year is suggestive. The daybook’s pottery sales of 1860 account for only 20 percent of the annual pottery sales reported to the Manufacturing Census. But Philbrick’s overriding
concern with documenting debt resulted in a significant amount of nondescript daybook records that specify only the sale of "ware." The charge of $8.03 to E. Ayers & Co. for "ware as pr. bill" is of this type. Pottery items identified by name (which are the most valuable for analysis) are known for only 7 percent of the total pottery sold in 1860, including the pans sold to J.W. Weston. Therefore, instead of using techniques that may be best suited to fuller documentation, this chapter places emphasis on the discovery of recurring patterns in the data which reflect overall business activity. These patterns are most powerful as evidence when the largest possible number of transactions over the longest period of time are taken into consideration. As an exercise in documentary archaeology, then, every entry from Philbrick's daybook has been compiled for analysis.²

Patterns of total sales of identified products give a excellent idea of general business practices. An assortment of utilitarian earthenwares made up Joseph's product line (fig. 8), including varieties of bowls, chamber pots, churns, dishes, flower pots, stove pipes, jugs, pitchers, pans, platters, pots, mugs, and stewers.

²For more on documentary archaeology, see Mary C. Beadry ed. Documentary Archaeology in the New World (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
However, over half of the revenue derived from sales of identified pottery were of one specific form, the milk pan, which was nearly always listed simply as "pans" in Philbrick's daybook. The importance of pans may be illustrated by comparing total sales figures to those of his four other top selling products (fig. 9). Because this figure represents only a small fraction of Philbrick's total pottery sales, precise monetary measurements are much less important than a grasp of their relative importance. This sample approximates their relative importance in his overall business. While the milk pan was clearly Philbrick's anchor product, the pot (fig. 10), a specific redware form, was also very important. Total sales figures of pots were greater than those of jugs, pudding pans, and flower pots combined. Thus, having isolated the forms that make up the vast majority of Philbrick's pottery sales, the remainder of this chapter considers important aspects of their historical context.

As we discover some of the primary functions of Philbrick's anchor products and the reasons consumers valued them in their daily lives, we come much closer to understanding the continuing importance of the redware potter in New England's pastoral society. Philbrick's wares were utilitarian, that is, they were valued by
consumers more for practical utility than for aesthetic qualities. Functional qualities ascribed to nineteenth-century redware rarely go beyond this fact, and there appears to be two general reasons for this. On the one hand, some functions appear to be self-evident, as in the case of flower pots. On the other, the diverse functions possible with certain types of products, such as jugs or jars, seems too large to be adequately described. However, nineteenth-century agricultural literature, cookbooks, and domestic proscriptive literature clearly define the functional role for which Philbrick’s pans were intended. Philbrick’s pots had many more functional qualities and were not as clearly identified in the literature, but they almost certainly had a related functional role.

Redware and the Dairy Economy

The predominance of pan sales recorded in Philbrick’s daybook indicates the degree to which his business relied on a specialized market whose customers shared similar needs. This niche market was located in the larger economy of dairy agriculture. Prior to the widespread acceptance of the continuous discharge centrifugal cream separator in the last quarter of the 1800s, the milk pan was the most widely used device for cream separation, a
step crucial in the production of butter. The milk pan relies on the effects of gravity. Milk taken directly from the cow contains fat in the form of finely dispersed globules that naturally clump and rise to the surface of milk. Most milk pans seem to fit the formal requirements described by one agricultural writer in 1844. He advised that "all milk-dishes should be of a broad and shallow form, for the purpose of exposing a large surface with a shallow depth of milk, in order to facilitate the disengagement of the several parts of milk."³ Gurdon Evans recommended in The Dairyman's Manual (1851) that "the creaming dish or pan should not be filled more than two or two and half inches deep."⁴ Of the many thousands of pans Philbrick made over his lifetime, only five survive that have been attributed to him (fig. 11). Averaging three and a half inches in height and seventeen inches in diameter, Philbrick’s surviving pans held about a gallon of milk with a two and a half inch milk level.⁵

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⁵Philbrick did not mark any of his wares and very rarely specified the size of his pans in his daybook. Two milk pans attributed to Philbrick are in the collection of
After milk had been collected from the cows, it was strained into pans and allowed to stand until the cream rose. The cream was then skimmed off and stored in cream pots until it had "acquired a pleasant sourness." This gave the butter a fuller and better flavor. Undoubtedly, many of Joseph's pots were used for this purpose (fig. 10). Then the cream was churned, disrupting the fat membranes and forming butter. The liquid that remained apart from the butter after churning was butter milk. Churns were not an important item for Philbrick's business. He recorded selling only nine of them. Apparently, there were better alternatives on the market. 

6Evans, 141.

7Women, who performed most of the milking chores, had a wide assortment of churns to choose from by the 1820s. Evans remarked that "to decide upon the best kind of churn would be hazardous, if not as difficult, as to sit in judgment on the various fashions of hats or bonnets worn in Broadway for the five years past....but being somewhat old fashioned in our ideas, we can hardly convince ourselves that there is any better kind of hand churn than the old fashioned dash-churn...," 147.

The principle types were plunger or dasher churns, barrel churns, box churns, and after the 1840s, atmospheric churns. These were made of a variety of materials, including wood (stave construction), stoneware, and tin. Philbrick's inexpensive earthenware churns were probably of the traditional plunger type--essentially a crock with a lid that had a hole for the insertion of a plunger. Joseph and Laura Lyman in The Philosophy of House-Keeping (Hartford, CT: Goodwin and Betts, 1867) thought "an earthenware churn is the best, because the
Joseph Philbrick followed a well-established tradition of redware production geared towards supplying New England dairy agriculture. James Deetz and Marley Brown found in studies of ceramics used in the Plymouth Colony area from 1620 to 1660 that domestic and imported earthenwares predominated and that they were related primarily to dairying activities. Dairying activity had greater need of earthenware pottery than did any other aspect of English yeoman foodways until 1660. A significant proportion of the ceramics used in the period between 1660-1760 continued to be earthenware for dairying purposes. Consumption patterns in Joseph Philbrick’s daybook suggests that the strong relationship between sweetest," that is, it left "no resin or taste" which sometimes occurred with wooden churns. For good discussions of nineteenth-century churns and butter-making in the Mid-Atlantic region, see Jensen, 92-113; and Karen Parsons, "Making Meaning, Making Butter: The Material World of Chester County Farm Women, 1750-1800," Master’s Thesis, University of Delaware, 1993. See also Cuthbert William Johnson’s comments on the importance of the cooper and "upper dairy-woman" in the larger dairies; The Modern Dairy and Cowkeeper, (London: J. Ridgeway, 1850), 74, 84-5.

dairy agriculture and earthenware production continued through the nineteenth century in New England, despite competition from the increasing numbers of ceramic imports and domestically produced utilitarian wares. Growth in dairy agriculture in northern New England in the nineteenth century provided an environment in which Joseph's pottery business could be viable.

Milk pans were the most common products of other redware potters in the nineteenth century, suggesting a similar reliance on the dairy economy. In Maine, for example, an 1805 probate inventory of Benjamin Porter of Wiscasset listed more "large milk pans" and "midling pans" than any other form. The inventory of Edmund Dana of Hallowell, already mentioned, shows the predominance of pots and pans. Manufacturing censuses for 1860 and 1870 show that milk pans were the most important products for John M. Safford and Silas H. Coburn, each independent pottery owners in Monmouth, Maine. The 1860 census shows the same to be true of the Kendrick family of potters in Hollis, Maine.\(^9\) There is strong evidence of this pattern outside Maine as well. In a study of Abraham Hews I's ledger (1780-1810) of Weston, Massachusetts, Teller found

milk pans listed more frequently than all other forms. Milk pans and pots were most frequently encountered in excavations of Joseph Hazeltine’s pottery site which operated just outside of Concord, New Hampshire from ca. 1823 to 1880. Daniel Clark, also from Concord, produced 25 kiln loads of milk pans in 1814. He wrote in September of 1816 in his diary that after beginning in June he had "finished turning 500 Doz milk pns"—6000 milk pans were anticipated for the year’s demand. Hervey Brooks of Goshen, Connecticut (a center for dairy production in New England) recorded in his account book on July 13, 1810 that he had thrown ten dozen milk pans. He lists making another eight dozen the following day on July 14. After attempts to replicate such production, modern redware potters working as living history interpreters at Old Sturbridge Village concluded that Brook’s efficiency was tremendous. All of this energy was directed at

10Teller, 251.

11David R. Starbuck and Mary B. Dupre, 149.


13Selitzer, 20.

14Worrell, "Re-Creating Ceramic Production and Tradition in a Living History Laboratory," 96.
supplying a significant consumer demand.

Butter was an extremely important component of the diet and commerce. Cheese was not as important a commodity during the nineteenth century and never reached butter's consumption levels. In 1849, 4.1 pounds of cheese per person were consumed in the United States and remained close to that level until World War II. On the other hand, butter consumption was 13.7 pounds per person in 1849 and increased to 20.1 pounds by 1900. In 1840 the most important dairy producing regions of the United States were located in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and the New England states. Shorthorn cattle, a dual purpose breed for the production of milk and beef, were very popular in the Kennebec River valley. By 1860, Maine farms averaged seven cows each. Through the 1800s butter production steadily increased in Maine, and farm families along the Kennebec river produced large quantities of surplus butter for export. Just south of

15 Selitzer, 25.


Skowhegan, a writer in 1817 in the Hallowell Gazette reported that "in the last season more than one hundred and sixty tons of butter were shipped from Hallowell alone, which at one shilling per pound is about $54,000." While cheese making declined in the 1850s, butter production in Maine increased by 25 percent by 1860, accounting for 23 percent of all the butter produced in New England. In this market, Philbrick's business could thrive.

**Seasonality, Foodways and Pottery**

The record Joseph Philbrick made in his daybook on May 25, 1860 crediting Melzar Cushing $0.80 for 16 pounds of veal was typical of the great variety of others which did not list any sales of pottery. These seemingly disparate kinds of transactions are often passed over by researchers as mundane neighborhood barter. But they can be extremely valuable in understanding how a craftsman's business operated in the local landscape of trade. The strong connections Philbrick's business had with Skowhegan's dairy agriculture can be correlated by seasonal patterning. This form of analysis is an

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18Quoted in Day, 112.

19Russell, 355.
especially useful tool of account book interpretation because it measures proportional, not total, economic activity over long periods of time. Dairying followed the cycle of the seasons, creating distinct and identifiable rhythms of work and production which are visible in Philbrick's daybook. These rhythms may be identified in proportions of certain types of trading activity from month to month and then related to pottery sales.

One of the most important ways seasonal variations in dairy agriculture were managed was by carefully scheduling animal husbandry and food-processing activities. Over the winter, hay, and perhaps a supplement of roots, "enable [the cow] to produce a rich and well-coloured sample of butter till within six weeks of parturition," according to The Modern Dairy and Cowkeeper of 1850. This period "is usually regulated to take place about the month of March or April, just when the cow, being in full milk, may soon be placed on the fresh spring pasture in April or May..." Calving timed with the spring's supplies of cheap and high-quality pasture forage resulted in the highest milk yields of the year. For centuries, this seasonal pattern governed dairy production and everyone

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20 See Hubka, 146.

21 Johnson, 9.
eagerly awaited the spring and early summer, when "the milk is more abundant and of a finer flavor." In Maine, milk production peaked in the month of June, a little later than southern New England where winters ended sooner.

Very little milk trading activity, however, appeared in Philbrick's daybook, suggesting not that milk was an insignificant element of the diet--cookery books from the 1800s are filled with recipes calling for milk as an important ingredient--only that Philbrick did not buy or sell much milk. Preservable cheese and butter, however, were much more stable products of commerce. The "spring flush" of milk is reflected in butter transactions (fig. 12) which peaked in June. Cheese trading rose in the fall following the aging or "ripening" process. It is not surprising that pan sales peaked in June at the same time butter did (fig. 13). Consumers tended to purchase products at the time of greatest need. While all of

\[\footnote{Evans, 47.} \]

\[\footnote{John Nicholson, The Farmer's Assistant,..., (Albany, NY: Henry C. Southwick and T.C. Fay, 1815), recommended ripening cheese for two months, 34. Cheese is a complex product made by coagulating milk, cutting and heating curd to extract whey, and then pressing and aging. It can be made from skim milk as well as whole milk. With the exception of skim milk cheeses, pans or other redware products do not appear to have played a major role in cheese production.} \]
Philbrick's other top selling products displayed a summer consumption pattern, none had such a distinct sales trajectory in June (fig. 14). Philbrick's pots did have an apex in June which almost certainly indicates their dairying functions.

Milk production peaked after calving then gradually decreased through the summer and into the winter. The Farmer's Assistant maintained that "If they [cows] are plentifully supplied with food as nutritious as that of green grass, they will usually give plenty of milk until very near the time of calving." According to The Dairyman's Manual, "a good cow should continue to yield a flow of milk but slightly diminished, till at least three months with calf, and not very much diminished for three months more to come."\(^{24}\)

Milk was not the only product of the dairy cow. Ideally, a good dairy cow produced a calf every spring, and farmers considered calf production as important as

source of revenue as milk, butter, and cheese. Gurdon Evans observed that "milk of the best quality or of the greatest quantity is not given till the cow has reached the age of four or five years and had two or three calves." He advised the farmer to "rear only the calves of his very best cows...instead of slaughtering indiscriminately all of his calves, as many do...".

Heifers generally arrived at the age of puberty when they were about 18 months old, and seasonal management of pregnancy was an important factor in raising calves to be milk cows. Nicholson stressed that "pains should be constantly taken to select the most promising [calves] for raising, provided they are brought forth in the proper season." He advised selecting those which were born early in the spring because they endured the first winter better and would be ready to give a calf by their second year. On the other hand, "those [calves] brought forth late will not so well endure the succeeding winter; and, if heifers, will usually go to the third year, before they are with

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25 In calculating the profit obtained from a cow annually, Johnson recommended totaling the expense of "the rent, public burthens, two diggings, and cost of seed per annum of, say 1 1/2 acres of land, on one side, and the ordinary average produce of a cow on the other; namely--A calf, The milk," 63.

26 Evans, 46, 31.
calf...".27 Calves intended for veal were slaughtered at about six weeks old.28 Thus, veal and butter transactions along with pan sales surged in Skowhegan's peak month of dairying activity (fig. 15). A few farmers timed calving to occur in the fall to take advantage of the nutritious stubble from the harvested fields and the higher butter prices; this is seen in the slight increases in September.29

In a study of eighteenth-century Deerfield, Massachusetts foodways based on the analysis of eleven farm account books and sixty-seven probate inventories (making up approximately 4000 records), Daphne Derven found that veal made up 8 percent of all meat entries. In Philbrick's account book, 62 percent of all meat entries were veal, giving a clear indication of the degree to which Philbrick's pottery business intersected with dairy agriculture. A total of 1951 pounds of veal were recorded, 57 percent of which were credits. Census records confirm that the veal Philbrick sold most often went to local tradesmen while the veal received in credit

27Nicholson, 147, 150.
28Beecher, 20; Nicholson, 150.
29Johnson said that "'stuble' butter is made from August until the cows are removed from the pastures," 90.
was from local farmers. Philbrick's largest single supplier of veal was Melzar Cushing who was listed as a farmer in Bloomfield in the 1860 population census. Over a period from 1848 to 1860, Cushing is credited for 73 1/2 pounds of veal, including the fresh veal of May 25th, 1860. On the other hand, the daybook lists a substantial amount of pottery that Philbrick sold to him over the same period, a total of 40 pans and 5 pots.

**Competitive Analysis**

Creaming technology and efforts to discern and increase milk production made dairy agriculture a pan intensive enterprise. Large numbers of pans were reported to be necessary for the traditional skimming method, especially in the bigger dairies. William Johnson said that "the produce of 100 cows, giving on average 8 quarts per day (a large average...), would fill 50 milk-dishes at each milking, and would require a ground surface of 500 square feet, as the milk dishes are invariably placed on the floor."³⁰ Evans recommended a rack that could hold up to eighty pans.³¹ Thomas Walter Ward, Jr., of Shrewsbury, Massachusetts wrote his sister in June of 1847 of the

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³⁰Johnson, 83.

³¹Evans, 140.
impact of 20 cows, 14 of which were in full lactation:

...We have for the present turned the bedroom or the south room so-called into a dairy room. It is much more convenient than the old 'cheese room.' And better than the cellar, and with 75 to 80 pans of milk looks rather imposing. We make more than 80 pounds of butter a week....

The widely encouraged practice of processing the milk of each cow separately intensified the need for pans. Many writers advocated that by keeping the milk of different cows separated, "the quantity and quality of their products can easily be determined." This was essential in monitoring milk yields and distinguishing unproductive from productive cows. All dairy authorities agreed that "none should be kept which are not esteemed 'good milkers.'" John Hobert of Chemung, New York found that "by churning the milk of each cow separately, that one of


33John Nicholson, 147; Evans advised farmers "to set each cow's milk separate for a few days, and ascertain, by actual experiment, the exact amount of butter yielded by each cow, under similar circumstances," 53.

my best cows will make as much butter as three of my poorest giving the same quantity of milk.\textsuperscript{35} In light of such advice, additional pans to keep milk organized must have seemed like a wise investment.

That Philbrick’s business could effectively reach a large number of customers who shared similar needs explains only part of the answer to why consumers chose his products over others. Skowhegan was not an isolated rural outpost where consumers had little choice but to accept the local product. Nor was Skowhegan’s earthenware market made up of neighborhood friends and conservatives intent on upholding a bygone custom. Residents had access to a large assortment of imported and domestically produced wares, some examples of which are in the collections of the Skowhegan History House (fig. 16). Because the milk pan was an extremely important component of dairy production in the 1800s, it is not surprising that an extraordinary number of materials competed for a share of the market. Analysis of the features, strengths, weaknesses, and performance of Philbrick’s anchor products, especially his pans, compared to those of competitors provides a fuller understanding of consumer choices.

\textsuperscript{35}Quoted in Evans, 136.
Few dairy authorities in the nineteenth century could agree on the best types of milk pans. Henry Stephens in The Book of the Farm (1844) admitted that "there seems to be a difference of opinion [over] which of those substances have [i.e., raise] the greatest quantity of cream from the milk" and William Johnson in The Modern Dairy and Cowkeeper (1850) agreed, saying "there reigns much diversity of opinion on the subject."\(^{36}\) Stephens evaluated pans composed of stoneware, wood, metal, and stone. The stoneware was of two types: "common ware" and "Wedgwood’s."\(^{37}\) The wooden pans were cooper’s work and composed of oak staves bound with iron hoops. The metal

\(^{36}\)Stephens, 897; Johnson, 86.

\(^{37}\)Stephens reference to Wedgwood’s stoneware actually may be a reference to his earthenware, namely his creamware (or "Queensware"). The Wedgwood factory made plain wares for practical dairies and fancy decorated ware’s for very elaborate dairies of the wealthy. It should be mentioned that the latter were primarily for the amusement of English aristocrats and became status symbols in the eighteenth century. The dairy at Woburn Abbey, completed in about 1794, was described by Prince Puckler Muskau as "a prominent and beautiful object. It is a sort of Chinese temple, decorated with a profusion of white marble, and coloured glasses, in the center is a fountain, and round the walls hundreds of large dishes and bowls, of Chinese and Japan porcelain of every form and colour filled with new milk and cream." Discussion of these high end dairy wares is beyond the scope here, since their use was limited to a narrow range of consumers. For a good discussion of these wares, however, see Patricia Pelehach, "Wedgwood Dairy Ware," Wedgwood Society of New York Newsletter (November, 1994), 4-8; see also Parsons, 6-12, 52. The quote is from Pelechach, 6-7.
pans were made of block-tin or zinc while the stone pans were hewn out of the solid block and polished; they were not portable. Other "milk-dishes" were formed with a combination of materials, such as "wooden vessels lined with block-tin or zinc, and German cast-iron dishes lined with porcelain." For Stephens, metal pans rusted and "the thought of keeping milk in metallic dishes [was] unpleasant to the mind." Wooden milk-dishes "require[d] much labour to keep them thoroughly clean." Stoneware, however, though "easily frangible," was "nevertheless, so cheap, so easily cleaned, and so safe in use, that it forms the most convenient material for milk-dishes to every class of country people."  

William Johnson's chief objection to the use of wooden milk vessels was "the great difficulty and the consequent labour and close attention requisite to remove all acidity...and which, penetrating the pores of the wood, sometimes resists all the patient scrubbing...". He was skeptical of the practice of painting wooden milk pails and pans to reduce the labor in cleaning. He noted that not only "is the expense considerable, as the vessels must be finished off with peculiar care, and require to

38Stephens, 897.
39Stephens, 898.
get three coats of the composition at first, and one yearly afterwards, but the milk for days after they are brought into use has a perceptible taste of paint." He thought the milk pans made of tinned copper and the cast iron lined with enamel too costly. Instead, he advocated the use of glass. Although he found that the glass pans did not raise cream as well as wood, "acidity cannot be communicated to glass, requiring merely to be first washed with luke-warm water, then rinsed in cold water and placed in a rack to dry." Although one historian of the dairy industry in America said that "glass was ahead of its time" it was too costly for most farmers at 75 cents to one dollar a pan.

Few urged the use of lead-glazed earthenwares in the 1800s. One who did—Rufus Adams, a native of New England—sounded the usual warning: "The proper receptacles for milk are earthen pans, or wooden bowls, but none of these should be lined with lead, as the poisonous nature of that metal will affect the milk." The dangers of lead-glazed crockery were well known. The toxicity of lead glazes

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40 Johnson, 465.
41 Johnson, 87.
42 Selitzer, 42.
43 Adams, 5.
were exposed in the late eighteenth century and continued to be widely publicized. By 1785, the *Pennsylvania Mercury* was reporting in America that the contamination of foods from lead glazes was "a slow but sure poison, chiefly affecting the nerves, that enfeebles the constitution, and produce paleness, tremors, gripes, palsy, &c..."\(^44\) Cookery books of the 1800s did not fail to mention these potential health hazards. Despite the warnings, however, consumer demand for redware remained strong in New England and craftsmen continued to expose themselves to the hazards of supplying it.

*A New System of Domestic Cookery* (Boston, 1807), a cookbook known to have been used in Skowhegan before the Civil War, recommended that acidic food not be kept in "glazed red ware" because "a strong poison is produced."\(^45\)


\(^{45}\)A Lady, *A New System of Domestic Cookery. Formed Upon Principles of Economy, and Adapted to the Use of Private Families*, (Boston: Andrews and Cummings and L. Blake, 1807), x. White says that a "cook-book, dated 1807... was owned by Mrs. [Joseph] Locke, and her daughter, Mrs. Frances Rollins..." Elise Fellows White, "From 'Concerning Old Bloomfield'" [1926] Typescript on file at Skowhegan History House, Skowhegan, ME. Inserted in the cover of the cookbook is a note saying that the cookbook "belonged to Mrs. Rollins, in the old Locke Tavern.... Given by her to Deborah T. Fellows." The cookbook is kept in Joseph Locke’s desk at the Skowhegan History House.
The cookbook was used at the Locke Tavern and one of Joseph's best customers was the tavern's owner, Joseph Locke. He is listed in Philbrick's daybook as having purchased 79 pieces of redware over seventeen years. Apparently, knowledge of the potential dangers of redware's lead glaze did not necessarily prevent its use. Undoubtedly many were careful to avoid contact with acidic substances when using lead-glazed wares, but the question of how lead glazes influenced consumption and usage deserves further study.46

Besides the toxicity of the glaze, there were other drawbacks. Compared to products made of materials like stoneware and tin, red earthenware chipped, cracked, and broke easily. Large numbers of surviving redware artifacts, Philbrick's among them, have chipped up glazes and webs of tiny cracks called crazing. Struck by the ephemerality of an earthenware tavern mug, Benjamin Franklin wrote in 1773 "thou must at last untimely fall,

46Perhaps others followed practices like those Lydia Child wrote of in The American Frugal Housewife... 12th ed. (Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1833; reprint, Worthington, Ohio: Historical Society, 1965), "It is a good plan to put new earthen ware in cold water, and let it heat gradually, until it boils--then cool again. A handful of rye, or wheat bran, thrown in while it is boiling, will preserve the glazing, so that it will not be destroyed by acid or salt," 11.
be broken to Pieces, and cast away." And this is exactly what happened to the vast majority of redware made in America. If a pewter mug untimely fell (and many did), one could get it fixed, live with a dent, or even use the valuable metal as a down payment for a new one.

Although many materials vied in the marketplace, there were several reasons why Joseph Philbrick’s pottery continued to compete. First, his pans were inexpensive, and this could make a significant difference in the larger dairies where large numbers of pans were required. Most sold were priced at $0.13 or $0.17. Comparative pricing analysis awaits further study, but it is reasonable to assume that pans made of materials like tin and wood were comparatively affordable. But redware didn’t rust and could be cleaned much easier with less time than wood. Redware was certainly a cheaper alternative than stoneware and factory-made earthenwares, such as yellow ware and white ware. Although redware broke more easily, inexpensive replacements could be supplied quickly on the local level. Another important reason has to do with the

seasonal needs of dairy agriculture. Although nineteenth-century dairy authorities sometimes gave contradictory advice and often engaged in heated debates, all agreed that cool temperatures were crucial in the creation of dairy products. This need for cool temperatures resulted from the summer season of dairy processing in the era before refrigeration. This requirement had a significant impact on all of the material culture of dairy processing, including nineteenth-century rural architecture in northern New England.48 Those involved with dairying

48Beginning in the early 1800s, large numbers of progressive farmers reorganized their detached houses and barns into connected configurations. Designed for the multipurpose agricultural and household production that characterized much of the rural population, certain workrooms of the connected farm were often designed as milk rooms, butteries, and cheese rooms. These were usually located in the "back house" of the connected farm configuration, although milk rooms for butter making were also often found in the cellar of the main or "big" house. A "big" house, "little" house, "back" house and barn made up configuration of the connected farm. Hubka, 9, 54, 125.

The Farmer’s Assistant recommended two "apartments" for the dairy—"a clean cool room in the cellar for milk, and a dark room above ground for drying and keeping the cheese." Nicholson, 46. Some dairy producers diverted a small stream through a "spring house." Spring water not only controlled creaming and churning temperatures, but was also used for a multitude of other dairy related purposes, such as cleaning (always stressed in dairy literature), preservation, and processing of dairy products. New Hampshire’s royal governor John Wenworth, used a spring house and large numbers of redware milk pans in the late eighteenth-century. See David R. Starbuck, ed. "America’s First Summer Resort," New Hampshire Archaeologist 30, no. 1 (1989), 10-11, 53-4, 77-80, 94.

The Modern Dairy and Cowkeeper said that the dairy room "should be made of brick or stone, with a floor of
managed seasonal temperatures through the built environment and by processing dairy products at the coolest times of the day.49

Joseph’s anchor products were well designed for the warm summer season. The control of temperature was crucial in raising cream from milk, and here lead-glazed redwares had a particular advantage. Milk, as an extremely perishable product, had to be cooled to at least 60 degrees Fahrenheit within two hours to prevent spoilage. The Farmer’s Assistant states that "new milk should be made as cool as possible, and the cooler it is thus made, the more suddenly and effectually the cream will rise."50 Glazed only on the inside, the porous outer earthenware of Philbrick’s pans could utilize the

the same materials" not only for "being more readily and frequently washed" but also to keep the temperature down in the summer. In addition, the dairy was "commonly placed on the northern side of the house, where it may be readily shaded from the sun by other more elevated buildings, or by trees." If this didn’t reduce the temperature enough, "dropping a piece of pure ice in each milk-pan, or by placing a pailful in the dairy, which, by giving off its cold, sensibly lowers the atmospheric temperature." Johnson, 74, 84.

49Adams urged that "in hot weather the cream should be skimmed from the milk at or before sunrise, before the dairy house becomes warm, nor should the milk in hot weather stand in its receptacles for more than twenty-four hours, nor be skimmed in the evening till after sun set," 6.

50Nicholson, 42.
evaporation of water to very effectively cool its contents. Evaporation from the unglazed outside walls of pots could keep the skimmed cream cool and fresh. Ancient in origin, the Egyptians used this cooling technique so effectively that they manufactured ice even though air temperatures never approached freezing.51

Apart from the actual physical aspects of Philbrick's pottery, the local context of his business and marketing strategies had a constellation of competitive advantages. His daybook itself epitomizes one of the great advantages of living in a town for all of one's working life, keeping up with the latest local events, and knowing the credit worthiness of residents. As an instrument for recording debt, the daybook reflected an economic world inhabited by people Joseph knew. He could increase the purchasing power of his customers through the extension of credit. Through immersion into the local economy, Philbrick could propel his business. Exchange facilitated by account books represented a kind of collaborative interaction that

51Nell du Vall, Domestic Technology: A Chronology of Developments, (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall & Co., 1988), 56. Nicholson said "If milk be kept in tin pans, and set within earthen ones, of a texture so porous, so that the water in them will gradually exude, this will impart a great degree of coolness to the milk," 46. Some redware potters also made watercoolers that took advantage of "sweating" to keep liquid contents cool. Ketchum, 6.
developed a joint interest in mutual success and financial security. Philbrick could supply pottery as well as his wife's textiles to satisfy debts on other's daybooks. For Philbrick, it made good business sense to purchase products on credit from those who tended to purchase his pottery. Likewise, people such as Melzar Cushing realized the advantages of purchasing goods on credit from those like Philbrick who had a demand for fresh veal.

Philbrick's kiln on the landscape was a visible sign to townspeople of a substantial investment and long term commitment. He became firmly established in one community, Skowhegan. He never moved. He was a town clerk, a selectman, a Captain in the local militia, and a leader in the regional Masonic organization. His wife Paulina was the Treasurer and Secretary of the local Maternal Association. Together, they had children who attended local schools. When townspeople purchased Philbrick's products, they invested in more than just needful things. They affirmed social ties. Much of Philbrick's enterprise was built on these relationships with customers and what he knew and remembered about each of them. Many of Philbrick's competitors were mass producers who wholesaled to merchants and had little grasp of exactly who their customers were. On the other hand, Philbrick was the primary marketer of his own wares and
knew a great number of customers. Just how many is not known, but over 800 are listed in the daybook. He could spot and target potential customers. A family of eight headed by a dairy farmer would have had a much higher long term business value than an elderly widow living alone. Customer lifestyles, in other words, impacted customer value to Philbrick. Thus, he adapted the majority of his business to meeting the needs of a special group of consumers large enough in number to make his business viable. This group of consumers tended to be involved in dairying.
Chapter 5
CONCLUSION

In 1869, Catherine Beecher advised American housewives on the best choices of "crockery" for their kitchens:

Brown earthen pans are said to be best for milk and for cooking. Tin pans are lighter, and more convenient, but are too cold for many purposes. Tall earthen jars, with covers, are good to hold butter, salt, lard, etc. Acids should never be put into the red earthen ware, as there is a poisonous ingredient in the glazing which the acid takes off. Stone ware is better and stronger, and safer every way than any other kind.¹

Despite the remarkable pace of technological and industrial development and the corresponding increased affordability of most types of utilitarian wares made in Europe and the United States in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, lead-glazed redware (or "brown earthenware" as it was sometimes called), continued to be a viable food-related product into the early twentieth century. Beecher’s attitudes reveal much about some of the variety of materials and forms associated with utilitarian wares that vied in the marketplace for

¹Beecher, 373.
household acceptance during the nineteenth century. While nimbly pointing out the advantages and disadvantages of redware and tin, she clearly reveals her belief that stoneware was the best: "better and stronger and safer every way than any other kind." To be sure, redware production in New England was in serious decline by 1869, but as Beecher indicates, remarkably, it was not dead. Indeed Skowhegan's elderly potter of 72 years of age could still be seen making redware pottery in his little shop next to Currier Brook.

This thesis has examined Joseph Philbrick's career as a potter with a view towards understanding the continuing importance of redware in the daily lives of its consumers. The goal of Chapter 2 was to demonstrate that redware indeed continued to be a profitable business in nineteenth century New England. When Philbrick was beginning his career in the early 1800s, what were the prospects of the pottery business? What future did young potters see? Many scholars have assumed that farming as a primary occupation must have been part of their vision. Nineteenth-century redware production in New England has been interpreted as rural and local, minor and occasional, an ancillary and increasingly anachronistic connection farmers had to neighborhood agricultural exchange. Close investigation of Joseph Philbrick's working world,
however, reveals that it does not fit neatly into the farmer-craft model expected of these rural craftsmen. Furthermore, as Beecher indicates, redware was not yet the product of a bygone age and continued to fulfill important needs for consumers.

Pottery making was not a part time activity for Joseph Philbrick. It was his primary occupation. Farming was a minor revenue producing activity. An organized craft structure based on kinship alliances in Exeter, New Hampshire utilized sophisticated dispersal strategies that enabled him to eventually become an independent and viable pottery business owner. Kinship networks organized the transmission of skill, education, and capital. Younger sons of potters tended to stay in Exeter to take the place of their fathers while older sons established new potteries in locations in northern New England. They brought with them formal educations useful for commerce, significant amounts of starter capital, and some of the best craft training in pottery available in New England. Older sons like Joseph operated to advantage in uncompetitive markets away in new towns, allowing for the consolidation of reputation, family, and sphere of influence in one geographic location.

Rural Skowhegan provided a rich economic context in which Joseph Philbrick utilized a diverse inventory of
skills. Occupational diversification took many forms, and mixed production harnessed the commercial power of the household. Pottery sales made up the largest proportion of a relatively comfortable, middle class income. But Joseph was not alone in generating household earnings. His wife and daughters generated a significant amount of family income from the production of textiles. Joseph supplemented this and his pottery business with a variety of miscellaneous activities, including painting houses, hanging wall paper, writing legal documents, transporting neighbors in his wagon, even a little farming. Yet members of the community always identified Philbrick’s occupation as that of potter, as did he. The wide variety of production that Philbrick and his family carried out for supplemental income reflects the rich diversity of economic behavior that characterizes much of preindustrial rural New England in the nineteenth century.

This thesis is based largely on the evidence of Philbrick’s business account book. Of primary importance, then, was establishing how the account book itself functioned, what its purpose was, and what significance it had for Philbrick. It was determined that Philbrick used his account book as an instrument for recording debt. As a result, the account book only hints at a much larger business that included people he did not extend credit to.
For Joseph, there was no need to track all pottery sales, only those purchased on credit. The limited scope of Philbrick's account book, therefore, influenced the ways its dense detail was utilized as historical evidence. Instead of using techniques best suited to more comprehensive documentation, emphasis was placed on the discovery of recurring patterns reflective of overall business activity.

Patterns of consumption reveal how Philbrick made his pottery business profitable and provide insight into the reasons consumers bought his products. Although Joseph's product line included a variety of utilitarian pottery products, one form sold more than any other, and that was the milk pan. Milk pans made up over half of the identified pottery sales recorded in Philbrick's daybook. Pots were also very important. Together, they made up the great majority of pottery sales, indicating that Philbrick's business thrived on a specialized market composed of customers who shared similar needs. These needs revolved around the processing of dairy products. The milk pan was the most widely used device for cream separation ("creaming"), an extremely important step in the production of butter. Pots were used as storage devices for cream, though they appear to have had many other uses not related to dairying. Growth in dairy
agriculture in northern New England in the nineteenth century provided the conditions in which Philbrick made his pottery business viable. Seasonal dairy activity correlated with milk pan sales recorded in the daybook demonstrates how integrally connected Philbrick's pottery business was with Skowhegan's dairy economy.

Because dairy agriculture was a pan intensive enterprise, many utilitarian products competed for a share of this potentially lucrative market. Although few dairy authorities recommended the use of lead-glazed redware for the dairy, no consensus existed on the best alternatives. The potential toxicity of lead glazes on crockery such as redware had been exposed in the late 1700s, and authors rarely failed to mention the danger afterwards. But this awareness did not stop many consumers. The low prices of Philbrick's pans were well-suited for the many dairy agriculture generally required. Pans and pots could be quickly and easily replaced. They were relatively easy to clean and were well designed for the warm summer season in which most dairy processing took place. Their unglazed outer surfaces could be saturated with water which evaporated and cooled the milk and cream. Cool temperatures for dairy processing were no secondary concern before the era of refrigeration and had a great impact on the material culture of dairy agriculture.
Finally, all of Philbrick's product sales benefited from the extension of credit, a advantageous sphere of influence in the local economy, and a strategic marketing position. He could increase the purchasing power of his customers through the extension of credit. Likewise, his indebtedness to others might provide an incentive for them to buy his pottery. With a substantial stake in the town's well-being, trade among residents was often more than just the simple exchange of commodities. Trade could represent an investment in and affirmation of social ties. As the primary marketer of his own wares, Philbrick could target his business to consumers who had need of his products.

The majority of sales of Philbrick's identified pottery indicates that consumers involved in dairy agriculture provided the basis of support that made Philbrick's business viable. And Philbrick's business does not appear to be atypical in this regard. Other nineteenth-century New England redware potters had similar emphasis in their product lines, suggesting similar constituencies of consumers. The connections redware businesses like Philbrick's had to dairy agriculture were not confined to the nineteenth century. In fact, they stretched back to the first English settlements in the New World in the seventeenth century.
FIGURES
Figure 1. Joseph Philbrick. Oil on canvas. Artist unknown. Skowhegan History House, Skowhegan, Maine. Photograph by the author.
Early Exeter Potters

Samuel Philbrick (1759-1840)
Potter, Cooper
Exeter, NH

Lydia Philbrick
Dodge
(m 1771)

Jabez Dodge (1747-1806)
Potter
Exeter, NH

Benjamin Dodge (1774-1838)
Potter
Portland, ME

Joseph Dodge (1776-1849)
Potter
Portsmouth, NH

Samuel Dodge (1783-1868)
Potter
Exeter, NH

Nancy Dodge (1785-1821)
Potter
Exeter, NH

John Lamson (1791-1863)
Potter
Exeter, NH

Jabez Dodge (1804-1866)
Potter
Portsmouth, NH

Samuel J. Dodge (1814-1867)
Potter
Exeter, NH

Asa B. Lamson (1818-1900)
Potter
Exeter, NH

Charles Dodge (1851-?)
Potter?

Mary Lamson
Dodge
(1852-1880)

Rufus Lamson (1844-?)
Potter
Exeter, NH

Frank Lamson (1859-1936)
Potter
Exeter, NH

Samuel Philbrick (1785-1868)
Potter
Skowhegan, ME

Joseph Philbrick (1797-1874)
Potter
Skowhegan, ME

William Philbrick (1803-?)
Potter
Exeter, NH

Key:

Marriage
Child
Legal Guardian
Sibling

*Note: Osborn family not shown

Figure 2. Early Exeter Potters
Figure 3. Samuel Philbrick. Daguerreotype. Artist unknown. Collection of Donald L. Philbrick. Photograph by the author.
Figure 4. Philbrick Family Sales Revenue. Joseph Philbrick Daybook 1833-1862.
Figure 6. Documented Revenue From Pottery. Joseph Philbrick Daybook 1834-1861. Manufacturing Census 1850 and 1860.
Figure 7. Number and Value of Cash Entries. Joseph Philbrick Daybook 1834-1861.
Figure 7. Pottery Attributed to Joseph Philbrick. Maine State Museum. Augusta, Maine. Photograph by the author.
Figure 9. Top Five Revenue Producing Products. Joseph Philbrick Daybook 1834-1860.
Figure 10. Pot Attributed to Joseph Philbrick. Collection of William Philbrick. Photograph by the author.
Figure 11. Pan Attributed to Joseph Philbrick. Skowhegan History House. Skowhegan, Maine. Photograph by the author.
Figure 12. Butter Transactions 1834-1861. Joseph Philbrick Daybook.
Figure 13. Recorded pan sales 1834-1861. Joseph Philbrick Daybook.
Figure 14. Top Four Products Sales Excluding Pans. Joseph Philbrick Daybook 1834-1861.
Figure 15. Pans and Skowhegan's Dairy Economy. Joseph Philbrick Daybook 1834-1861.
Figure 16. Refined Ceramics Used in Nineteenth-century Skowhegan, Maine. Skowhegan History House. Skowhegan, Maine. Photograph by the author.
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