Assessing the Cincinnati China Resource Sheet

Part I: What is the Cincinnati China

Direction: Read the archeologist and historian conclusions regarding the Cincinnati China found near the slave quarters at the Arlington House and answer the guided questions.

Artifact #1



Artifact #1: Cincinnatiware Plate (Replica) from Society of the Cincinnati

The Society of Cincinnati: The Society of the Cincinnati was organized on May 13, 1783, near Newburgh, NY, by Continental officers who fought in the American Revolution. It is an organization of descendents of eligible commissioned officers of the Continental Army or Navy and commissioned officers of the French Army or Navy who served in the Revolutionary War. The Society is the first veteran's organization established in the United States. George Washington served as the organization's President General from 1783 until his death in 1799.

Cincinnatiware Plate: These plates were given to member of the organization. The Three Cincinnatiware shreds are from a set given to George and Martha Washington during his presidency by several French military officers. They were part of George Washington Parke Custis's, a owner of Arlington House, "Washington Treasury."

Artifact #2



Artifact #2: Archeology Group's Findings of Shreds of Cincinnatiware Plate Shreds

The items in this group were found during an excavation of the two surviving slave quarters at Arlington House. The quarters, just behind the main house, were occupied by slaves who worked in the mansion. They include:

- Three shards of Cincinnati ware, one hand-painted polychrome, two blue transfer print
- Hand from a china doll, toy cup
- Hook with an eye at one end
- Small ceramic marble with an incised decoration

It was not uncommon for slaves who worked in the master's house to receive cast off items from the master's family.

Assessment Question:

- 1. Why was the Society of Cincinnati Plate at the Arlington House?
- 2. What is the significance of the Society of Cincinnati?
- 3. Would you have given this item away?

4. What assumption are historians and archeologists making about the China based on the location the shreds were found?

Part II: Do You Think the China was Gift?

Direction: Historians and archeologists have concluded that the Curtis Family, slave holders, gave the Society of Cincinnati china to their slaves. Based on your knowledge of the relationship between the slave holder and their slaves that resided near the family, do you believe the china was given to the slaves? Answer the question in complete sentences. Make sure to reference the sources used in Activity B as well as address the following item:

- Do you believe the Cincinnati China was given to slaves?
- If so, what condition do you believe the china was in?
- What sources from Activity B played a role in your decision?
- Do you think the china was given to just any slave or a slave the family favored?