

Friends of Camp Security

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A Revolutionary War Prison Camp

(1781-1783)

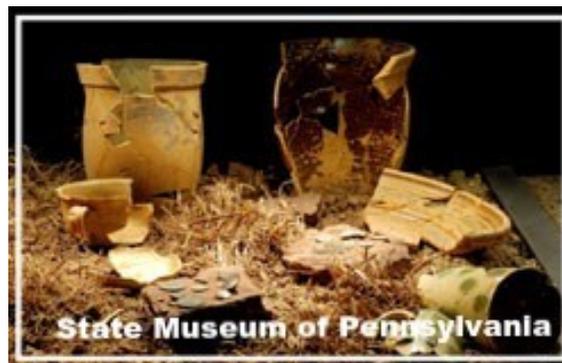
In the last issue, the diet of the Camp Security prisoners was addressed. Due to the interest in this topic, the following article discusses this subject in more detail. Thank you to Brenda Carr-Weller, a zooarchaeologist and FOCS volunteer.

Zooarchaeology

by Brenda Carr-Weller

An archaeological site's assemblage is the collection of objects, generally referred to as artifacts, which reflect the activities and even the ideals of past people. An assemblage can contain any number or variety of artifact types, including ceramics, glass vessels, architectural material, clothing fasteners, jewelry, currency, toys, etc. Each artifact type is equally important in understanding past lifeways. Bone, shell and botanical artifacts are significant for the information they provide about dietary activities, and for the insight to other aspects of past lifeways that can be gained from them, including ethnic identity, social status, food processing technologies, and economy.

When the Wiest Site (36YO46) was excavated in 1979, archaeologists recovered a substantial assemblage of artifacts associable with the occupation of Camp Indulgence. The assemblage encompassed a wide variety of artifact types representing the daily life, and military nature, of the encampment. As part of the continued effort to preserve the history of Camp Security and Camp Indulgence, the Wiest Site assemblage was re-examined nearly 25 years later, and it was discovered that thousands of bone fragments, representing dietary refuse from the encampments, still needed to be studied.



Artifacts from 1979 Dig

I was granted the opportunity to research this significant collection, and carried out an evaluation of food supply at the encampments through detailed analysis of the specimens, combined with review of various historical records including camp documents, agricultural data, soldiers' memoirs, and late 18th century British cookbooks. The results of my research are presented as an addendum report at www.campsecurity.org/1979-excavation/.

Analysis of the Wiest Site bone revealed that beef and mutton were the primary meat sources at Camp Indulgence. Pork was also consumed, but ranked third as a meat source. The relative importance of beef, mutton and pork in camp diet correlated with local farming practices of the time, which suggested prisoners were provisioned with livestock procured from local farms; a focus on cattle and sheep raising, with limited maintenance of swine herds, was demonstrated within the estate inventories of local farmers.



Identified skeletal elements and age at death ranges indicated livestock were slaughtered opportunistically by the camp's residents, rather than at the optimal age for each species. If following standard butchery practices, carcasses could have been hung for days or weeks prior to butchery. The form and location of butchery marks reflected processing into large meat cuts suitable for serving groups rather than individuals. Preparation of broth from broken and boiled bones was indicated by intensive fracturing of marrow-filled elements. Boneless meat products and by-products, though not observable in the assemblage, would also have been consumed; contemporaneous cookbooks include recipes using kidneys, tongue, heart, stomach, intestines, calves' brains, suet and blood. Meat could have been preserved through salting or smoking, or it could have been potted or pickled in redware jars found during excavation. Cooking was likely done over an open fire or in an earthen oven, both of which were common camp cooking methods during the war.

Analysis also revealed that while food supply may have been more reliable for the Camp Security/Camp Indulgence prisoners than elsewhere, it was still likely inadequate. Meat yield calculations demonstrated approximately 5000 pounds of meat (including offal) from a minimum of nine cattle, nine sheep, and three swine. Early camp records indicated approximately 600 men, women and children were sent to Camp Indulgence. While 5000 pounds of meat sounds like an ample supply for a 22-month occupation, distributed among up to 600 people it would have resulted in a ration of less 1/4 oz. meat per person each day. Very few fish, fowl and wild game were present in the assemblage, making it unlikely that these sources would have greatly increased meat rations. British soldiers and their families were accustomed to a diet heavily-laden with meat, and soldiers were allotted rations of 16 oz. of beef or 9 oz. of pork per day by the British Army. Consequently, even if the population of Camp Indulgence was greatly reduced (e.g. to 25-50 people), the resulting ration (e.g. 2.5 oz.- 5 oz. meat/person) would still have seemed like starvation.

When the site of Camp Security is discovered, excavation may yield an assemblage containing additional dietary refuse. It is likely that meals served within the stockade would have been the same as those prepared outside the stockade, but the potential for additional insight to food supply and differential treatment of prisoners would only be realized through analysis of that assemblage. I look forward, along with other FOCS supporters, to the day when the remains of Camp Security are found.



Brenda Carr-Weller

Brenda Carr-Weller is a zooarchaeologist with 25 years of experience in the Mid-Atlantic region. She has studied faunal assemblages recovered from taverns, urban neighborhoods, farmsteads, academic institutions, Native American sites including a Susquehannock village in Cumberland County, and from Camp Indulgence. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and her Master of Arts from Binghamton University-SUNY. She is currently working with archaeological firms and community organizations as a zooarchaeological consultant, but has accumulated experience studying historic artifact assemblages, as well as faunal, having been an archaeology laboratory director for 15 years.

FOCS Trip to The Museum of the American Revolution

The Friends of Camp Security is sponsoring a coach trip to the newly opened Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia on Thursday, October 26. The museum currently has some artifacts on exhibit that were found during a dig at the Camp Indulgence area within the Camp Security site.

We will be boarding the Bailey coach at 7:45 at the Queensgate Shopping Center upper lot, entered off of Queenswood Drive. The all-inclusive charge includes bus transportation, driver gratuity, museum admission, extras just for our group and a catered box lunch.

To reserve your seat/seats, FOCS needs to receive a check for \$80 per person for members of Friends of Camp Security, \$90 per person for non-members. New members are always welcome and anyone can easily join at www.campsecurity.org. This trip is expected to fill up fast, so please get your reservations in. Reservations need to include email addresses and/or phone numbers so that everyone can be contacted a few weeks before departure for lunch choices.

Please make checks payable to Friends of Camp Security and send them to FOCS, c/o Rob Campbell, 811 Marvell Dr., York, PA 17402. If there are any questions, contact June Lloyd by email at ycpa89@msn.com.

Membership Drive

Please help us by donating at www.campsecurity.org or <https://www.gofundme.com/finding-camp-security>.

Please direct any comments or questions to:

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