Economic and Ecological Intersections in 19th-Century Tenant Foodways at the WJ Weeks Archaeological Site

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Abstract: Brookhaven National Laboratory sits within the Long Island pine barrens – an environmental misnomer that has led the landscape to be often imagined as ecologically and culturally "barren." Despite this attribution, the broader Long Island pine barrens landscape is home to numerous Indigenous pre-and-post-contact and settler historical residences. This study examines the foodways of mid-nineteenth century tenant farmers at one such homestead, the WJ Weeks site (also called the Yellow House). Ceramics and faunal remains excavated from the site in 2004 are analyzed alongside archival sources, histories of shellfish and cordwood industries, and other natural resources of the Peconic river. The assemblage features a high ratio of locally produced and utilitarian ceramics compared to more expensive refined earthenware and tableware. Among those more expensive table wares, sherds exhibit a variety of design styles and patterns, suggesting vessels were bought individually. Faunal remains create a baseline for species consumed on-site, such as cow, pig, and shellfish. These findings speak to the socio-economic constraints faced by the tenants in the Yellow House and the materiality of social stratification between laborers and landowners, especially when read alongside the diaries of wealthy landlord William J. Weeks. They also offer insight into the economic and ecological networks these actors were enmeshed in – from hard-shell clams harvested at the coastline and perch from the nearby pond, consumed locally, to the cords of wood carted to New York City – ultimately reframing the historic pine barrens as an abundant cultural network. Through this study, I practice faunal remains and ceramic identification, as well as the integration of textual sources with archaeological data – all key skills in the field of historical archaeology. This study aims to support the Department of Energy's stewardship and documentation of Brookhaven's cultural resources.

The Brookhaven Laboratory property today is surrounded at all sides by an ecological network known as the Long Island Pine Barrens. The ongoings of this network buzz along day-to-day; turkeys and geese trailed by their chicks and goslings, deer flitting by at the edges of the woods, tired interns pedaling to and from their dorms, and hungry ticks fiending for an unsuspecting ankle. Though consistently rhetorized as culturally and environmentally "barren", this ecosystem is deeply significant: home to 162 species of which the above are only a small part, responsible for supplying Long Islanders with water, and holding, through changing

materialities and significations of the landscape, memory of the long processes of human settlement.

One moment in this history is marked at the WJ Weeks archaeological site—the foundations of a home also called the Yellow House. The 2005 archaeological evaluation of the site (Merwin and Manfra 2005) sketches a brief history of the Yellow House and its occupants. The property's probable first appearance is on the 1843 Mather and Smith *Geological Map of Long and Staten Islands*, on land owned by William Jones Weeks (1821-1897). WJ Weeks followed after his father, James H. Weeks, as a Long Island "gentleman farmer," speculator, and rentier. With a hand in selecting LIRR stations, building schoolhouses, and serving as County Superintendent of the Poor, Weeks made a considerable impact on the landscape of central Long Island, both socially and physically. It is through mentions in his journals that the occupants of the Yellow House are identified by name, though often only appear ephemerally. Weeks mentions Edmund Ackerly (also spelled Akerly), who rented the house with his family and worked for Weeks cutting cordwood from at least 1840 to around 1860. While no other consistent residents are highlighted, other farm hands likely moved in and out seasonally; all owning no land of their own and dependent on tenant farming or cordwood harvesting for subsistence (Merwin and Manfra 2005).

To better develop the lives of these tenants, otherwise resigned to mere sentences in Weeks' diaries, this project examines the archaeological traces, archival background, and natural resources surrounding the WJ Weeks site, expanding on previous research done for the 2005 report. The archaeological investigation revealed traces of a residential foundation, artifact deposits from loss and discard, and a small faunal assemblage. While the faunal remains from the excavation are largely unidentifiable, due to considerable fragmentation, three partial teeth,

several long bones, one vertebrae and metatarsal demonstrate representative species, though not complete counts, of the animals consumed on-site. This smaller data set is expanded in conversation with a more in-depth ceramic analysis, providing ratios of vessel wares, common design motifs and styles. Additionally, understanding that ecological relations are also fundamentally social relations, I use natural resource histories to speculate about the economic (human and non-human) network available to the Yellow House residents. Through the perpetual redefinition and redistribution of these resources—such as cordwood and shellfish—human meanings are also transformed (Anderson 2015), gesturing to the gradual manipulation of inter-class labor relations as they emerge in the material conditions of individual lives.

The attention to exchange and extraction, as forms of relationship, is intended to disentangle what might otherwise appear a "common sense" approach to historical class: the Weeks were rich, having more property and goods, and their tenants were poor, having less. Wurst and Lewis (2020) emphasize that the economy is imagined, and that imagination is scaffolded by a "complex web of dialectically related social relations" (2020: 342). As, for example, agricultural practice changes over time, itself a composite of countless exchanges between farmers, markets, and soil, so do the supposedly superstructural justifications for those practices (Stoll 2003: 46). With this consideration, historical records can be used in conversation with the previously discussed assemblage as a site where the construction of class becomes more visible. The diaries of WJ Weeks, who the Ackerlys' and other tenants rented from and worked for, are particularly helpful texts for developing upper-class perspectives of the environment and labor dynamics. Stray details in the diaries, such as seasonal patterns to fishing, references to pay logs and the movement of individuals in and out of Yaphank also map relationships between different local actors.

The following report begins with an analysis of several diary entries and other records to establish a qualitative, historical baseline for socio-economic dynamics and locations of natural resources within the nineteenth-century Long Island Pine Barrens. This baseline is then read against the material traces associated with the WJ Weeks archaeological site, revealing that despite engaging similar practices and visiting similar locations for subsistence, the social and economic standing of the Weeks family and their tenants differed dramatically. This divergence denaturalizes the wealth of the Weeks household and considers how that wealth was accrued. The ecology of the Pine Barrens was exploited by both the land-owning and laboring classes, but only one group had access to means for wide distribution (the Long Island Rail Road) and documented authority over land and resources. I ultimately argue that the ecological and economic networks established throughout the Pine Barrens were shaped by this class stratification.

Land Ownership, Class, and Ecology in the Archives

Key records such as probates, deeds, and the diaries of William J. Weeks discuss land ownership, land use, and top-down perceptions of class at the Yellow House site specifically and in nineteenth-century central Long Island more broadly. These documents provide the value of various resources, such as cordwood and livestock, as well as locations of procurement and the names of individuals involved in exchange. In his diaries, William J. Weeks writes extensively about farming, outlining the seasonal patterns to crop production and cordwood harvesting. The diaries can also be read critically to ascertain Weeks' understanding of his relationships (with friends, family, tenants, and non-human actors alike) and give shape to the broader social context that these exchanges enter. However, these sources are also limited in their capacity to provide

access to the lives of the Yellow House tenants, who are not authors of any of the available documents. Their preliminary position in the chronology of this paper is deliberate as they produce a limited, upper-class and emic historical context, which later analysis of the Yellow House site assemblage may deepen. With this limitation in mind, these sources are used to create a tentative description of class and natural resource flow between Yaphank, Wampmissic, and more distant markets. Clear but textually understated stratification between land-owning and laboring classes emerges both in direct inventories of property and in subtler rhetorical inclinations in Weeks' writing.

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, William J. Weeks's father James H. Weeks and his uncleWillam Sidney Smith frequently bought land between Yaphank and Wampmissic. When he reached adulthood, W.J. Weeks joined his father and uncle in land speculation, and throughout the 1800s a large portion of the private land between the two towns would be distributed amongst the three men. They extracted value from their properties in a variety of ways. On the 1840-1870 censuses, WJ and James H. Weeks are both listed as farmers, and while W.J. Weeks' diaries corroborate a significant amount of time directed towards farming activities, this does not reflect how the family made the bulk of their income. On May 26, 1851, W.J. records in his diary a profit of $5.75 from his spring asparagus crop. This number pales in comparison to the value of the cordwood harvests W.J. takes account of two months later: 484 cords of wood for spring and summer, with an estimated value of about $575.96. An additional 594 cords were cut for his father that same season, worth about $706.86.[1] The Weeks sold much

[1] Value is estimated based on an 1867 probate for Yaphank resident Nathan Davis, who cut wood in Wampmissic for the Weeks. Among other belongings, Davis had 4.31 cords of wood, valued at $8.63, or approximately $2.00 per cord. Accounting for an inflation rate of 3.3% between 1851 and 1867 (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis 2025), the estimated 1851 value per cord is $1.19.

of this wood as fuel to the Long Island Rail Road, where James served as president from 1847-1850; essentially profiting from both input and output to the company.

The Weeks relied on local labor for farming and logging endeavors. Through their interactions with these workers—simultaneously neighbors, tenants, and employees—the socio-economic ecosystem of Yaphank and Wampmissic begins to take shape. According to his diaries, W.J. Weeks regularly hired at least ten men living in Yaphank and Wampmissic between 1851 and 1853. The majority cut cordwood, but some helped with farming tasks, especially more labor-intensive ones. W.J. Weeks most frequently contracted a man named Mitchell Petty to clear, plow, and plant his crops (primarily asparagus and potatoes) in the spring and summer, and to cut his firewood all year round.[2] Cordwood was also harvested throughout the year, though Weeks records much more frequent trips to check on production in Wampmissic during the fall and winter, likely when his farming demanded less attention. His relationships with the "choppers" (as Weeks refers to the wood cutters in his diaries), and particularly with his tenant Edmund Ackerly, are illuminated in these entries. Ackerly is mentioned by name in ten of the seventeen-cordwood-related entries Weeks makes in 1852, forming a close connection between him and Weeks's records of the industry as a whole. These mentions are generally brief, simply noting moments of interaction in the process of business: "At 12 O'C, went with the train to Wampmissic and took an account of wood cut by Ackerly—he has been cutting not far from the Rail Road and near our east line—I returned with the afternoon train" (May 1, 1852). In these entries, Ackerly appears as part of the realization of a resource; the mechanism by which cordwood is acquired.

[2] Weeks compensated Petty $0.25 per load of firewood (diary entry).

However, Weeks' prose grows occasionally more passionate in condemnation of Ackerly's drinking, especially when Ackerly is unable or unwilling to work:

> "About 10 O'C I went to Wampmissic on horseback—called to see Akerly—found him abed and not fully recovered from a drunken *spree*—his family all absent as it is said he turned them out on Monday night" (December 22, 1852, original emphasis).
>
> "I went to Wampmissic on horseback and hence to the county road to find a place for Akerly to cut wood—found him at the house, abed and still under the effects of a debauch" (February 26, 1853).
>
> "I started early for Wampmissic - Akerly, upon whom I depended to assist me, had taken a *drop* too much, but with him and the boys I managed to run out the line to the stone in the manor and reached home between 3 + 4 pm" (March 10, 1853, original emphasis).
>
> "…Akerly has had another spree this week and had cut no wood for me" (March 19, 1853).

These passages hint towards evident but non-explicit relationships between Weeks' perceptions of labor, class, and morality. Weeks did not drink personally and notably does not discuss the alcohol use of his family or friends, but exclusively that of tenants and laborers.[3] These mentions appear when Ackerly's drinking disrupts his economic directive, an obvious irritation for Weeks, whose wealth relies in part on his labor. The language itself is also richly implicative. Weeks uses euphemisms; a "spree", "drop", or "debauch", diverting from the act of drinking itself and communicating disdain. Through these connected impulses towards omission and indignation, Weeks separates the implicit faults of his workers from himself and his family. Ackerly's social proximity to Weeks is limited, despite living on his land and logging his forests.

Outside of Weeks's diaries, a paper trail for the Ackerly family is scarce. According to census data from 1840 to 1870, Edmund Ackerly lived with his wife, Julia, and the pair had

[3] Weeks' reservations about alcohol are developed in an additional entry made on March 13, 1853. Weeks records a visit to a man named James Howell, a tenant at a property not owned by Weeks, remarking: "He had probably the consumption – his constitution broken down by the indulgence in intoxicating drinks, I think perhaps he is beyond the reach of any remedy…"

between nine and twelve children. By 1860, they had left the Yellow House and moved thirteen miles east to the town of Riverhead. Edmund and his sons continued to work as farm laborers and do not appear to have acquired any property. Edmund Ackerly died sometime before 1880, at which point his wife, Julia, moved again to Smithtown to live with her daughter and son-in-law. The rest of the children, then adults, may have stayed in Riverhead (US Census Bureau 1840-1870).

In addition to labor engagements and land use, W.J. Weeks's diaries also document a range of subsistence and extractive practices—such as clamming, fishing, and hunting—that reflect a more complex relationship to the Pine Barrens landscape not captured by formal markets. Weeks purchased a bushel of oysters from Bellport, at the southern side of Long Island, and clams were dug by Mitchell Petty on the north shore. These references indicate brushes with the historic shellfish industry along the United States eastern seaboard. Shellfish, and oysters in particular, were extensively fished from Long Island coasts in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Overharvesting significantly depleted oyster populations in the following centuries (Ermgassen et al. 2012); similar declines affected hard-shell clam populations (Brennessel 2008: 98). The degree to which Yaphank residents engaged with shellfish harvesting commercially is unclear from Weeks's diaries, but this resource was clearly utilized in a personal subsistence or recreational capacity.

Weeks also fished for perch and trout in spring and summer at the Carmans river and pond, running north-south through Yaphank. Fishing in the pond was likely a common local practice, as Weeks comments in April of 1853: "The perch are caught at this time along the borders of the pond in short set nets in large numbers." A third fish species, menhaden, were often used as fertilizer on nineteenth-century Long Island (Anderson 2015). Weeks briefly

attempted this in the spring of 1851 but concluded fish were an unsuitable fertilizer for his asparagus. Finally, Weeks hunted ducks and other fowl recreationally, especially when family visited. Duck hunts had varying degrees of success as in this example from October 5, 1852; "I waded in the river and shot two black ducks, but one concealed himself in the bushes and I did not recover it." These activities appear to be supplemental for Weeks, unlikely contributing in a significant way to the diet of his family, nor turning profit.

Faunal Remains

Most of the small faunal assemblage are too fragmented to identify. While insufficient to fully reconstruct the diet of the Yellow House tenants, these results help identify local food sources. Given that most of the bone fragments are only identified in broad categories, I will discuss species possibilities according to taxonomical family affiliation before moving to brief considerations of manipulations such as cutting and burning and distribution across the site. Displaying rough similarities to the local species mentioned in the W.J. Weeks diaries, probate inventories, and census tallies, the faunal remains suggest that tenants participated in the same networks as the Weekses throughout the Pine Barrens for portions of their subsistence.

Mammal remains constitute a significant portion of the faunal collection. Domestic species identified include cow (a rib, three long bones, and upper premolar), and pig (two premolars). There are an additional 16 large mammal bone fragments, possibly more cow or pig. White tail deer are the only large, non-domestic mammal on Long Island, though it is not clear from the current number of identified specimens whether the Yellow House residents hunted deer. Twenty-nine other mammal bone fragments may represent a number of species, including goat or sheep, which other families in the area commonly kept as livestock. Non-mammal and

non-shellfish faunal remains are sparse, comprising a single fish vertebra and eight bird long bones. These types of skeletons are more fragile and may have not survived overgrowth and disturbance as well. Finally, the most common remains are shell fragments: 293 hard shell clam fragments, 7 soft shell clam fragments, and 23 oyster fragments. Unless purchased from neighbors, Yellow House residents would likely have traveled to either the north or south coasts of the island to harvest this shellfish. Few bone fragments show obvious manipulation, though there is some evidence of butchering and cooking on two cut-marked and 47 burned bones. The remains do not seem to be distributed across the site in a meaningful fashion, with roughly equivalent numbers being found in all four excavation units located both near the house foundations and in the yard, adjacent to a bottle refuse pile (Merwin and Manfra 2005).

Ceramic Analysis: Local Economies and Projecting Respectability

As with the faunal remains, disturbance and fragmentation of the ceramics create challenges for interpretation. Determining the minimum numbers of vessels or a definitive count of vessel types was not possible at this stage of analysis. However, ware types (fabric and table, tea, or utilitarian use), design styles, and distribution of types across the site provide a basis for interpretation.

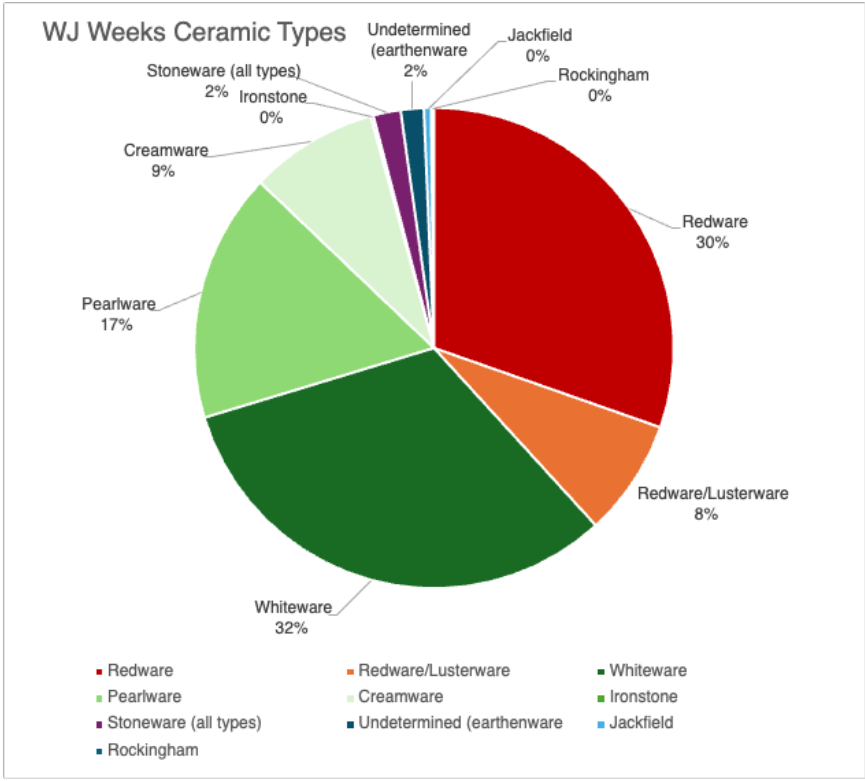

Figure 1. Distribution of ceramic types

Refined earthenwares (white, pearl, and creamware) account for a slight majority of the ceramics in this assemblage (approximately 58%). While dating between varieties is not absolute, creamware (9%) and pearlware (17%) were produced from the mid-eighteenth to early-nineteenth century; whiteware (32%) dominates after 1830 (Sussman 2000; Hume 1969; Miller 1991). Design styles and colors provide the most reliable dating information. Most of these dates cluster around early-to-mid nineteenth century, with some variation. For example, purple, red, and green transfer-printed pearlwares produced between 1829 and 1840 (Sussman 1977) feature alongside banded annular factory-made slipware, produced throughout the nineteenth century (Sussman 1997). The most common printed and painted designs are flowers and floral motifs. Very few sherds are exact matches, though they often have highly similar patterns.

Figure 2. Transfer-printed whiteware sherds with similar patterns

As one example, Figure 2 shows three transfer-printed whiteware sherds with similar, but not matching, patterns. The sherds are stippled with fish-scale or looped exterior designs around what is likely a central landscape image. The pattern similarities are intensified by the near match in print color; the left sherds are dark purple, while the right is a slightly lighter maroon.

Following O'Donovan and Wurst (2013), high design variation but little consistency could suggest that tenants at the Yellow House bought their table and tea wares piecemeal, at lower cost or secondhand, and with little purchasing agency beyond what was immediately available (2013:82). The Ackerlys' and their successors were unlikely to be in the financial position to purchase full dining sets. However, the frequency of these approximate matches conveys some interest in the appearance of completeness. The tenants may have deliberately selected similar pieces over time as an aesthetic preference or to more closely resemble the dining sets owned by wealthier neighbors. In the notable absence of any porcelain, these refined

earthenwares are the most expensive ceramics in the assemblage. And despite constituting a technical majority of the ceramics, the ratio of table and tea wares to utilitarian redwares is relatively low when compared to other domestic sites in the region (Bernstein et al. 1999, 2003).

Figure 3. Blue transfer-printed whiteware plate

Even if purchased secondhand, these more expensive pieces were manufactured abroad and imported to the United States, then distributed towards rural areas like where the Yellow House tenants lived in central Long Island. In contrast, the second largest category in this assemblage was locally produced: redwares (including those decorated with luster) make up 38% of the ceramics. These vessels were generally less expensive and were more frequently for food preparation and storage. There is variation in fabric color, glaze, and surface treatment across the redware sherds. The fabric ranges from pale orange to dark red and glazes from clear (appearing on the ceramic body as light or dark red) to ginger (light brown and yellow) and black. Given

that glaze variation on American redwares is more representative of individual potter techniques than broad trends (Turnbaugh 1983), Yellow House tenants potentially bought vessels from several different makers, again, possibly reflecting secondhand purchases. About a fifth of the redwares are luster glazed, with a fine, red paste. This type of decorating is not exceedingly common in nineteenth century contexts (Miller 1980:2), but does appear in the collections of local Long Island historic pottery collectors (Butera 2003). In an earlier, colonial context, luster-glazed redwares are thought to emulate more expensive British-made tableware types, such as Jackfield (Bower 1985). The Yellow House assemblage does contain five Jackfield body and handle fragments (<1%), so it is possible that the luster-glazed redwares supplemented this more desirable, durable type.

Figure 4. Base of a redware utilitarian vessel with black glaze.

Finally, the assemblage includes a smaller amount of ironstone (<1%), utilitarian salt glazed and Albany slipped stoneware (2%) and Rockingham ware (<1%). Some of these ceramics may be intrusive or from later occupation of the site. For example, there are two cobalt-blue painted stoneware sherds that are generally dated to the late nineteenth century (Greer 1996), despite census data showing that the Ackerlys' had already left the Yellow House by 1860.

Klein (1991) summarizes across several ceramic analyses from domestic sites in the eighteenth and nineteenth century to suggest that ceramic values alone are insufficient to confer the socio-economic status of a household (1991:83). However, with support from census data (the Ackerlys had no listed property), and comparison to known wealthier households in the region, they reinforce the likelihood that Yellow House tenants had limited financial means. Furthermore, the emphasis on locally produced, and potentially locally sourced second-hand wares suggests that the Ackerlys and later residents didn't go far to find their ceramics. In such cases where options appear limited, a ceramic assemblage like this one often confirms pre-existing class designations more than meaningfully speaking to consumer choice (O'Donovan and Wurst 2013), but a limited agency might be read in small similarities between otherwise piecemeal patterns. If tenants of the Yellow House wanted to project a higher class status—or against perceptions of working-class moral uncleanliness that community members like WJ may have held—they may have exercised that limited choice by emulating wealthier neighbors.

Discussion: Ecological Relations at the Yellow House in Economic Context

Though the Ackerlys and Weekses lived relatively close to one another and engaged in interrelated activities, there were deeply felt material differences between families. The faunal remains found at the Yellow House are roughly similar to the species recorded in historical documents such as WJ Weeks' diaries and the census, albeit in small counts. The Yellow House tenants consumed or kept pigs, cows, and likely sheep or goats like other Yaphank residents. They harvested or purchased shellfish from the north and south shores of the island, and likely fished in local ponds, just as WJ Weeks did. However, despite sharing access to and contact with the same natural resources, the Yellow House ceramic assemblage confirms that the Ackerlys (and any subsequent tenants) lived much more meagerly than the land-owning class. The limited means of the Yellow House residents restricted their consumer choices to less expensive, locally produced ceramics like redwares. Though the assemblage does feature more expensive refined earthenware, table, and teaware, wide variation in decoration and patterning across suggest individual, possibly secondhand, purchases rather than acquisition of complete sets.

This contrast between environmental similarity and material disparity underscores the need for a relational view of class: one where shared landscapes are experienced differently depending on the direction of labor and capital flows. Though both classes fished in the same ponds, collected the same shellfish, and measured the same forest, these ecological activities may have had different economic associations—leisure versus necessity, and ownership versus wage labor. The form of these exchanges—the directions in which labor and product flow—produce class, rather than inbuilt access to particular natural resources (Wurst 1999:10). The resulting dynamic, as it relates to the limited tenant financial means displayed in the Yellow House assemblage, is a rural capitalist economy where elite families like the Weekses or the Smiths

control the *distribution* of and *profit* from key shared resources, in this case cordwood, through land ownership.

Another realization of these differences is the relative localization of the economy across social classes. For the tenants of the Yellow House, consumption was largely local, as evidenced by the emphasis on Long Island-produced ceramics and nearby food sources. Their connections to more distant markets are mediated through other actors both in their limited purchasing agency (buying expensive tableware piecemeal or secondhand) and in how the products of their labor, cordwood harvests, are sold first to locals, like the Weekses, to be exported.

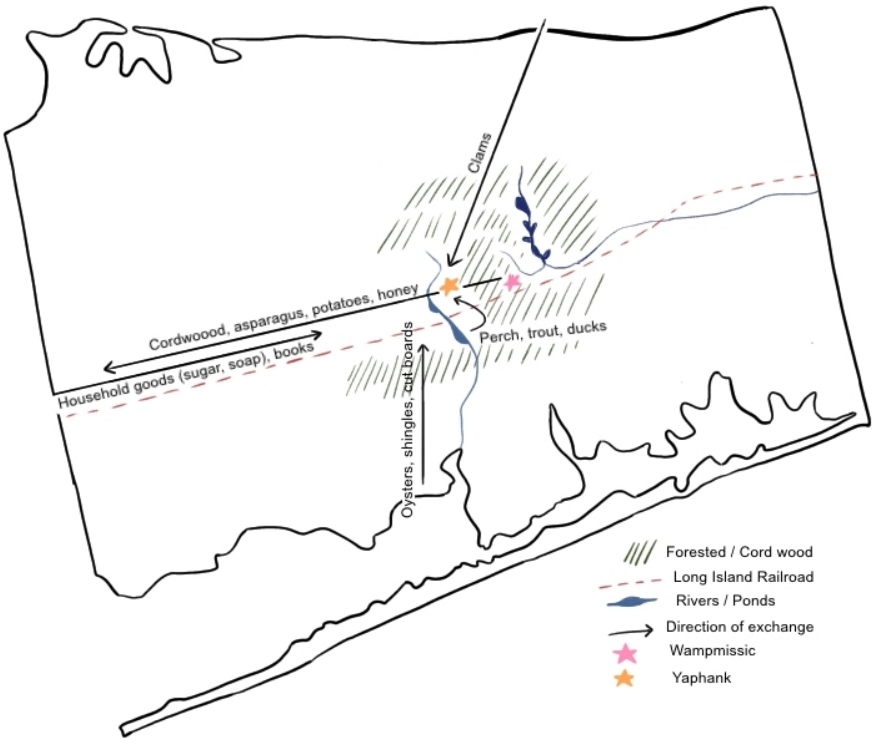

Figure 6. Map of resource flow to and from Yaphank/Wampmissic

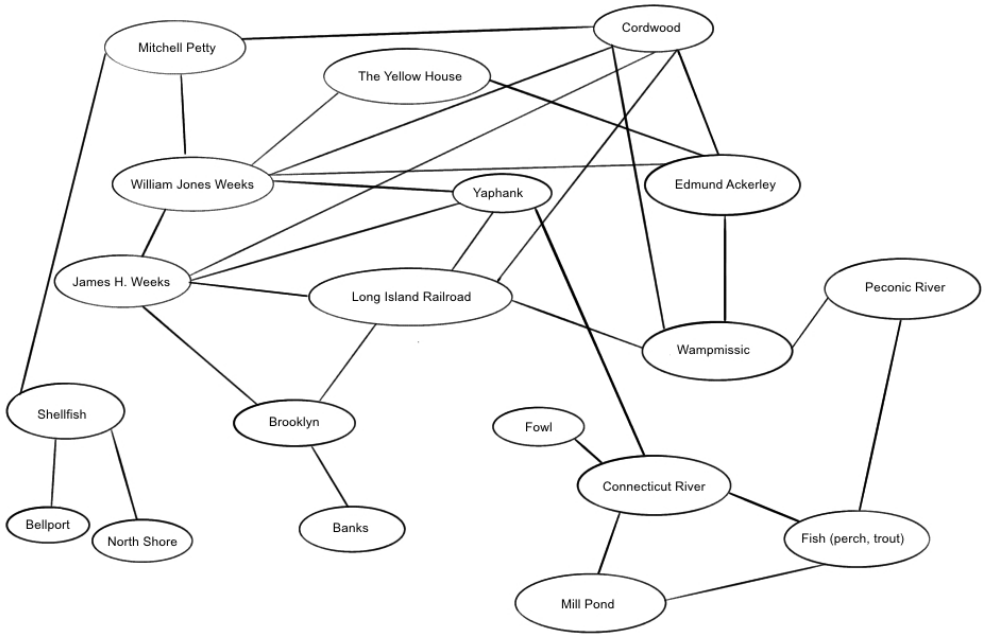

Figure 7. Ecological and economic relationships between local and regional actors

Figures 6 and 7 help visualize these layers of economic connectivity. In Figure 6, one relevant resource, cordwood, moves outward, while others like perch, trout, shellfish, and ducks remain local. Sugar, soap, and books are goods entering the area from more distant markets, all purchases from New York listed by WJ Weeks in his diaries. The movement of these goods occurs along the Long Island Rail Road. In Figure 7, Edmund Ackerly, representing the tenants as a group, is indirectly connected to the railroad through his labor position (harvesting cordwood) and physical location (Wampmissic). In contrast, WJ and James H. Weeks sell to and influence the running of the LIRR directly, affording them a larger web of connections.

Different mechanisms of income and resulting different labor realities for Weeks and the Ackerlys also likely affected relationships to the landscape. Wurst and Lewis (2020) note that

throughout the nineteenth century, working classes began to rely more intensely on wage labor as an interface between humans and subsistence (2020:342). Hunting and clamming appear like subsistence activities but require free time and tools to undertake. While the tenants probably did hunt and harvest clams given the faunal remains at the Yellow House, it's hard to estimate the exact time investment they would have been able to allot for these activities. Ackerly and his sons[4] were primarily occupied with logging, where they made the majority of their income. In contrast, Weeks spent significant hours immersed in traditional "subsistence" activities. This labor is symbolic while the labor of the Ackerlys is necessary for survival; Weeks writes about visiting the pond regularly to shoot ducks and whole days sunk into his personal garden, though his real living and luxuries were made through passive income streams. With this consideration, the abundance of the landscape is siloed through the economic control of the landowners. Weeks and others in his socio-economic class could have direct and regular connections with this ecological network because they were buoyed by the labor of their tenants.

This discussion is a limited approach to labor dynamics that does not yet account for race or gender. During the nineteenth century, households increasingly separated between internal (domestic) and external (work) spheres as men's labor became removed from the home (Klein 1991:79). With women being largely responsible for cooking and cleaning within the home, ceramic assemblages are often used to discuss their preferences and use patterns (1991:86). The Yellow House site could also be analyzed with consideration to women's labor and interactions with the environment. Nineteenth-century Long Island was also a multi-racial environment, and class designations and understanding of the landscape would certainly have been complicated by

[4] Weeks diary entries on March 4 and 10 both mention working with Ackerly and "his boys", likely in reference to Ackerly's sons. Using the 1850 census as a baseline, Ackerly's sons were aged approximately 8 and 11 in 1853.

different relationships to colonization, settlement, and enslavement. To examine these dynamics more in detail, the Yellow House assemblage and historical documentation might be compared with an examination of the Arches, a family of Native American, Black, or mixed-race heritage, who also lived on a Smith property during the same time period. Finally, this assemblage could also offer perspective on nineteenth-century ideas of social reform. The Ackerlys were poor but productive in an era where social reformists began to shift from casting poverty as an individual fault to a more widespread economic issue but still characterized the working class as dangerously criminal (Spencer-Wood and Baugher 2001:7). WJ Weeks served as County Superintendent of the Poor from 1869-1871 and established the Suffolk County Poor Farm (Merwin and Manfra 2005); tenants like the Ackerlys may have provided a contrast to less socially acceptable forms of poverty.

Conclusion

The central Long Island Pine Barrens ecosystem is a historically and presently significant cultural network. For the nineteenth-century residents of Yaphank and Wampmissic, the Pine Barrens offered places to hunt and fish as well as a critical economic engine: cordwood. Interaction with these natural resources—shaped by land ownership and labor dynamics—would have been part of creating class distinctions, in turn informing how individuals conceptualized their surrounding environment. In his diaries, WJ Weeks writes extensively about his innovative farming methods, which are now historically framed by then-contemporary debates about agricultural reform (Stoll 2003:43), and a settler culture on Long Island which equated land ownership with permanent alteration (Anderson 2015:417). While emphasizing the former in his writing, Weeks largely extracted his wealth from the latter: land ownership and the labor of his

"choppers", harvesting wood sold to the Long Island Rail Road and into New York City. The disparities in this system of resource movement are reflected in the material record at the Yellow House. However, beyond testifying to rural working-class hardship, the remnants of tenant foodways connect the Long Island Pine Barrens to larger networks of exchange. Tenants fished and hunted within this "barren" landscape and further modified the forest through cordwood harvesting.

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