

Setting the Table: Euro-Canadian table-setting Traditions in Mississauga, Ontario, from the Early 20th Century

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We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Introduction

- The University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) archaeological field school, the Schreiber Woods Project (SWP), examines the occupation of the Schreiber family, a British-Canadian family who resided on the North end of the property from the late 19th to early 20th century.
- The SWP collections include artifacts uncovered by students over the past 11 years from two middens at AjGw-535 and AjGw-534 on the North end of the current UTM campus where the Schreiber family once resided.
- Here we interpreted artifacts included in the Mystery of Mount Woodham table setting display in order to infer the social position and adherence of the Schreiber family within the context of late 19th to early 20th century Euro-Canadian Mississauga, ON.

The Mystery of Mount Woodham Project

- The Mystery of Mount Woodham Project engages with the SWP collections to form interpretations of the Schreiber family in the context of the late 19th century Euro-Canadian families in Mississauga, ON.
- Table settings, represent a stratified and typified aspect of late 19th century to early 20th century Euro-Canadian societal standards and can thus be used to interpret social adherence of the Schreiber family within this setting.

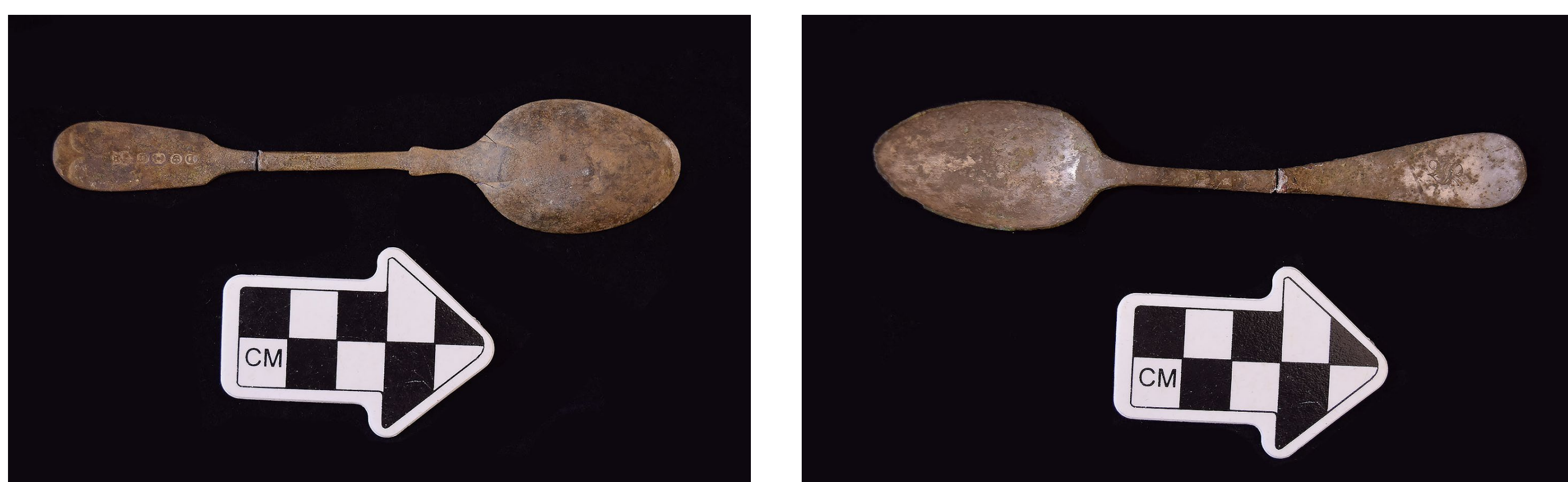
Table 1: Total and dinnerware specific counts of ceramic, glass, and metal artifacts sorted through from SWP collections in AjGw-535 (left) and AjGw-534 (right).

| AjGw-535 | | | AjGw-534 | | |
|----------|-------|--------------|----------|-------|--------------|
| Material | Count | Kitchen-ware | Material | Count | Kitchen-ware |
| Ceramic | 2737 | 2701 | Ceramic | 326 | 309 |
| Glass | 5960 | 1696 | Glass | 3476 | 452 |
| Metal | 1744 | 15 | Metal | 3643 | 217 |

Creating a Table Setting

- SWP collection artifacts were analysed to identify possible options for the table setting based on historical trends in patterns and types. (See Table 1 for total counts)
- Ceramic artifacts were previously sorted into 169 types. Keeping with trends from 1890 to 1910, ceramic types were chosen for porcelain displaying raised moulded motifs, gold tracing lines, and printed flowers of the Rococo style (Kenyon, 1995).
- Glassware options were limited by artifact fragmentation and difficulties in identifying various pieces as table glassware. The final table setting includes glassware with the most obvious purpose and relevance (McNally, 1982).
- Utensil options were less selective, as there are only eight identified utensils within the collection. Selected pieces were included based on relevance to the project.
- The final product is a dynamic setting representing the materials used in a multi-course dinner service. This includes; utensils for dessert, meat, salad, and soup; a full-sized dinner plate, a soup plate, a teacup and saucer; and glassware for water and alcoholic beverages such as wine (Figure 2).

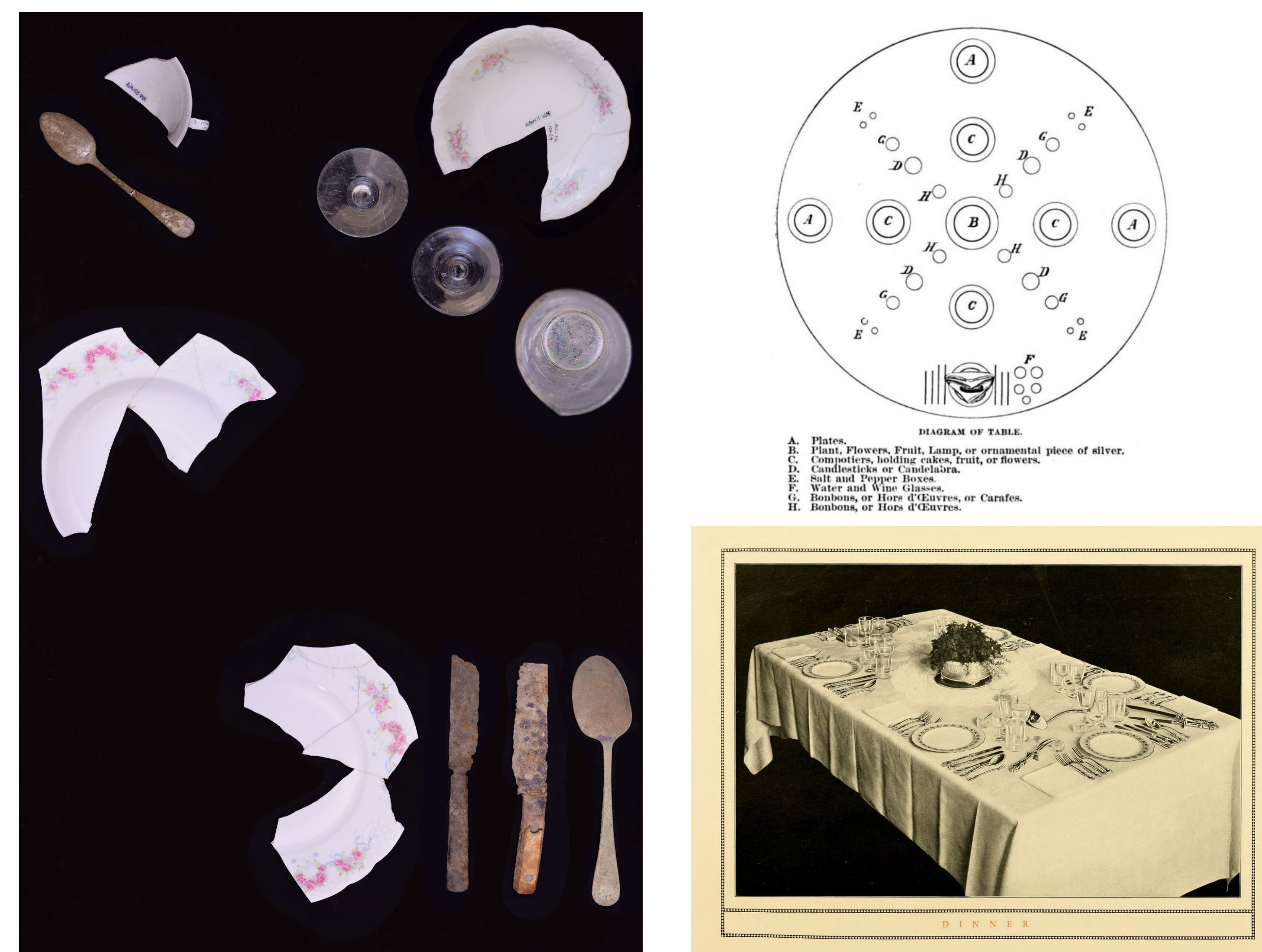
Figure 1. Left: Silver-plated 4 3/4" coffee spoon from Daniel and Arter (Silvercollections.it). Right: 5" coffee spoon from undetermined maker, with inscribed "S" on end of handle for – Schreiber.



Artifacts and Interpretations

- Ceramic pattern and material (typology) follow trends in ceramic economy during the late 19th to early 20th century in Eastern Ontario (Kenyon, 1995) (Figure 3).
- Prevalence of quantity within a single typology suggests that the Schreiber's purchased this ceramic service as a set rather than as individual pieces, a finding indicative of wealth (Hull, 2007)
- 'Carlsbad' ceramics originate from Austria; a popular exporter during this period (Kovels Antique Trader and Kenyon, 1995) (Figure 3).
- 'Carlsbad' ceramics were also found at a wealthy settler-colonial family site in Albany, New York (Brewer et al., 2010) and for purchase in popular catalogues (*Sears, Roebuck & Co.*, 1969 [1902]).
- The inscribed 'S' spoon resembles sets found in the *Sears, Roebuck & Co.*, catalogue from 1902 suggesting an adherence to purchase options found in 'cheaper' mainstream catalogues and social trends.
- Silver-plated utensils were often more affordable, but acceptable alternatives, to sterling silver as evident with the Daniel and Arter coffee spoon (Figure 1).
- The small tumbler was produced by *Sowerby and Co.*, a glass company which produced large quantities of tumblers in the late 19th century (Jackson, 2000) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Left: Recreated table setting using artifacts from SWP collections. Right top: Table setting suggestion from *Century Cookbook* (Ronald, 1985). Right bottom: Dinner table setting suggestion from *How to Set the Table* (Tyson Rorer, 1901).



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Figure 3: Left: small porcelain bowl with floral transfer print, moulded designs along edges, and gilded rims. Right: Base of bowl, note remnants of 'Carlsbad' and crown makers mark.



Discussion

- Interpretations of table setting components, suggests that the family (the Schreiber's) previously residing on the current North end of the UTM campus were able to adhere to societal standards for table setting etiquette in the late 19th to early 20th century Euro-Canadian context.
- Engaging with the material culture found associated with the Schreiber family cumulatively, brings to light how table setting etiquette, a socially distinct practice, can be used to interpret social status and adherence.
- The interaction between tableware ceramics, glass, and utensils suggests that the Schreiber's maintained an expected social status by purchasing specific products seemingly popular at the time.
- However, the Daniel and Arter spoon indicates the possible supplementation of certain objects with cheaper alternatives (Figure 1).

Conclusion and Future Research

- Analysis of combined materials used and discarded by the Schreiber family provides the unique opportunity to infer the social status and practices of this family.
- Investigations suggest that this family adhered to table setting etiquette of late 19th to early 20th century Euro-Canadian standards.
- Future research in this collection should consider the intersection between ceramic type quantities, quantities within types, and possible values to assess how this may indicate social stratification and adherence.

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