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An Early Nineteenth Century Farmstead in Western Illinois: The Seibert Site

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Located adjacent to Scott Air Force Base in northeastern St. Clair County, Illinois, the Seibert site (11S801) represents one of the earliest farmsteads in Shiloh Valley Township, continually occupied for nearly 200 years. David and Polly Everett first settled the site in 1811 and retained it until 1833, at which time it was sold to Joseph Ledergerber. Ledergerber, in turn, occupied the site until 1861, before selling the property to Hiram Pierce. The property again changed hands in the early twentieth century, when purchased by George Seibert.

The 2010 excavation of the 1.3 acre Seibert site led to the discovery of 47 subsurface features and the recovery of more than 20,000 individual artifacts, largely relating to the antebellum Everett and Ledergerber occupations. These features remained largely undisturbed by the subsequent occupations, demonstrating both changing site use and disposal patterns in post-bellum southwest Illinois.

The earliest (Everett) occupation occurred when the area was very much still the American frontier and subject to only moderate growth. The succeeding Ledergerber occupation occurred during a period of exponential regional growth, and thus Ledergerber lived in a much more established Euro-American community. The Everett farm had been a struggling, small-scale subsistence operation; Ledergerber transformed it to a very successful, commercial farm. This transformation can be seen in the material culture, not especially in type, but most certainly in quantity.

Sociocultural differences between the occupants were also observed, especially as noted in alcohol consumption patterns. The Everetts were likely devout Methodists (Polly's father having been a Methodist preacher), with no alcoholic beverage containers identified with their household. On the other hand, Ledergerber, a Swiss-German emigrant, was responsible for a minimum of 43 alcoholic bottles, dominated by wine, and 36 drinking glasses, including three stemware wine glasses. The wine bottles include only three hock bottles characteristic of the Rhine River region where Ledergerber was raised; the vast majority of the bottles were, surprisingly, the French Bordeaux style. It appears Ledergerber's service in the Swiss Guard under Charles X of France had clear effects on his taste and choice in alcoholic beverages.

Additionally, comparative data of early regional occupations came from Polly Everett's father's homestead (the Branscum site [11S1060]), located in the parcel to the immediate south. The Branscum site was excavated in 1996 and described in 2002 by Robert Mazrim. This facilitated a minor comparison between matching vessel patterns identified at both sites, potentially showing material exchange between the two, or at minimum, further reinforce the limited consumer choices available on the frontier.

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Appendices

To facilitate the production process, long appendices tables are available online in their original Excel or PDF format and are not included in the paper copy of this report. Copy the URLs below and paste them into a web browser to download the data. Excel and Acrobat Reader or similar programs that can open .xls and pdf files are required.

- A** Refined Ceramics: Minimum Vessel Count (MVC) Descriptions
http://tsas.illinois.edu/publications/data/TARR/31/11S801_Seibert_Appendix_A.xls
- B** Unrefined Ceramics: Minimum Vessel Count (MVC) Descriptions
http://tsas.illinois.edu/publications/data/TARR/31/11S801_Seibert_Appendix_B.xls
- C** Container Glass: Minimum Vessel Count (MVC) Descriptions Predicated on Rim and Closure Descriptions
http://tsas.illinois.edu/publications/data/TARR/31/11S801_Seibert_Appendix_C.xls

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- D** Container Glass: Minimum Vessel Count (MVC) Descriptions Predicated on Base Descriptions
http://tsas.illinois.edu/publications/data/TARR/31/11S801_Seibert_Appendix_D.xls
- E** General Artifact Catalog
http://tsas.illinois.edu/publications/data/TARR/31/11S801_Seibert_Appendix_E.xls

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*Back top: Excavation at the Selbert site.
Back bottom (left-to-right): Feature 3 excavation; Feature 23 excavation;
screening at the Selbert site.
Photography by ISAS staff.*

*Front (left-to-right): Broad-brush painted teacup; middle-period painted saucer;
black "English wine" bottle; John Bull Extract of Sarsaparilla bottle; Blue shell-
edge plate, marked: Davenport (Manufacturer) Hendersen and Gaines, New
Orleans, (imported); thimble; possible small-stroke painted teacup; carved ivory
handle.
Photography by Linda Alexander and Matthew E. Cross.*

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