

## EVERYDAY LIFE AT THE ARMSTRONG SITE



Eagle and Shield flask made between 1860 and 1880



Undecorated flask made between 1860 and 1880



Stoneware jar with cobalt floral decoration made between 1820 and 1880

Artifacts found on the site provided clues to everyday life and the buying habits of the site's occupants. They relied on traditional methods for storing food and at the same time introduced modern luxuries into their home. Tableware, pressed glassware, and silver-plated flatware demonstrated the use of contemporary table settings and occupants' financial ability to purchase newer items. At the same time, stoneware and ironware vessels indicated that the family relied on traditional storage methods and showed a sense of frugality.

The artifacts also reflected typical late nineteenth century market patterns. Post-Civil War industrial growth and the intensification of the coal mining industry allowed southwestern Pennsylvania consumers easier access to a broader mix of local and imported items, which could be bought at local merchants and, toward the end of the century, through mail-order catalogues like Sears and Roebuck.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

In terms of the regional agricultural economy, the demand for vegetable truck farming became increasingly important as the areas immediately adjoining the juncture of the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongahela Rivers became more industrialized and urbanized during the mid-nineteenth century. The small-scale farmers of the region could easily transport vegetables to markets in the Pittsburgh area. The 1880 agricultural census indicated that the family was operating a well-diversified farm and would have had hay, pork, and potatoes for sale or trade and would have participated in this Pittsburgh area market.

The investigations at the Armstrong Site have provided new information that has resulted in a greater understanding of the everyday lives of rural households and their place in the economic system of western Pennsylvania during the late nineteenth century.

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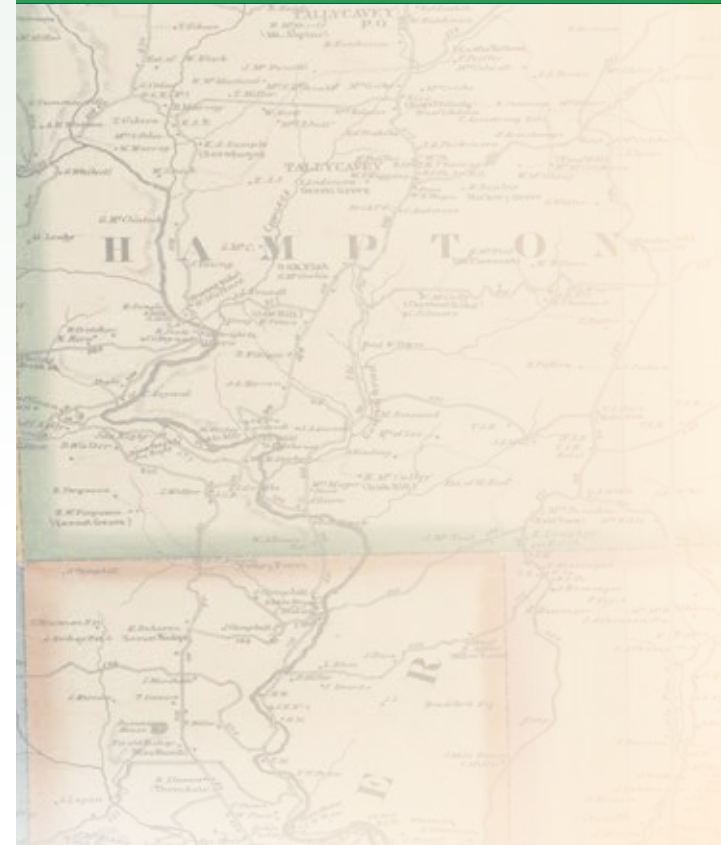


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## Archaeology at the ARMSTRONG SITE

Hampton Township,  
Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

36AL629



**Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission**

Milepost 40 - Milepost 48

Total Reconstruction and Widening Project



PROJECT  
LOCATION

## FINDING AND LEARNING ABOUT THE SITE

The Armstrong Site (36AL629) is located in Hampton Township, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania and provides a snapshot into rural life in Western Pennsylvania during the 19th century. The archaeological site was discovered by the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) during a survey for the proposed Milepost 40 - Milepost 48 Total Reconstruction and Widening Project. The site was evaluated and considered to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Due to the widening and reconstruction of the existing Turnpike, the site would be destroyed; therefore, the PTC hired consultant archaeologists to excavate the site, analyze the artifacts, produce a report, and share the information with the public.

The Armstrong Site was named after the Armstrong family, who were early settlers in the region and important to the development of the area. The early history of the Armstrong family is not well documented. It appears that brothers George and Thomas (Sr.) migrated from one of the Scotch-Irish settlements in Adams County to farm. The first house associated with the family was a one-and-a-half story, two bay, log house reportedly constructed in 1803. This house was relocated to Depreciation Lands Museum in Allison Park, Pennsylvania in 1973 and is pictured in the photograph above.



Through the early and middle nineteenth century, the ensuing generations of the Armstrong family acquired additional land and continued to farm in Hampton Township. The large holdings of Thomas Armstrong (Jr.) were subdivided in 1871, when by an order of the Allegheny Court of Common Pleas, John Armstrong was awarded part of the estate. It appears that the house associated with the archaeological site was constructed after John Armstrong acquired the property. Deed records show that John Armstrong sold his 59 acre property to Adam, Robert, Samuel, and John Seibert for \$5000 in 1876. At the time, the property contained a frame house and a frame stable. The farm stayed in the Seibert family until 1922, when the property was acquired by Peter Rhein. Rhein subsequently sold the farm to Arthur and Florence Eiszler in 1944. It appears that the Eiszler family subdivided the property and retained the farmhouse and barn. These structures were demolished around the time the Turnpike was constructed in 1950.



View of the Armstrong Site during the Eiszler Occupation



Two privy features prior to excavation. Privies often contain items that were discarded by the site's occupants.



Two privy features mid-excavation.



View of the partially excavated farmhouse cellar hole.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS & ANALYSIS

The archaeological excavations at the Armstrong Site were conducted in three phases, which is typical of archaeological investigations that are undertaken to comply with state and federal laws. The first phase, known as a Phase I Identification survey, involved establishing the presence or absence of archaeological sites within the area to be impacted by construction activities. This work involved excavation of small holes (shovel test pits) systematically spaced at 50 foot intervals. These shovel test pits yielded artifacts such as historic ceramics, bottle glass, lamp glass, window glass, pieces of brick, and nails. Two depressions in the ground marking the former locations of buildings were also observed. Due to the identification of the site, a Phase II survey was undertaken which evaluated the site's eligibility for the NRHP. This involved the excavation of 24 additional 1x1 meter square test units which yielded thousands of additional artifacts and numerous archaeological features, including two privies (outhouses). All parties involved in the project agreed that the site was eligible for the NRHP due to the information the site could provide regarding life in western Pennsylvania during the late nineteenth century. It was also agreed that Phase III excavations were warranted to address some very basic research questions about the history of the site's occupants and how they participated in the growing agricultural economy of the region.