

NCP 17  
10

Turkey Run Farm  
McLean, Virginia

U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Harpers Ferry Center  
Library

A REPORT ON FURNISHINGS  
Furnishing Report

By Charles E. Fisher, Park Historian

George Washington Memorial Parkway  
National Capital Parks  
National Park Service  
United States Department of the Interior

February 1973

**ATTENTION:**

**Portions of this scanned document  
are illegible due to the poor quality  
of the source document.**

## PREFACE

The preliminary furnishing decisions dealing with Turkey Run Farm were based, in part, on the assumption that the value of household and agricultural goods, including livestock, owned by a low income farmer in Fairfax County during the late colonial period would generally be less than £65. As a poor freeholder or tenant, a farmer in Fairfax County originally would have made some of the household items, arranging for the acquisition of others from local craftsmen and merchants. The number of items normally found on such a farm would partly be determined by the family's economic position, but also influenced by agricultural needs and the size of the dwelling and the number of occupants. Since the cabin at Turkey Run will be replaced by a somewhat larger structure, the acquisition list includes items for the projected house. Most of the furniture and agricultural items, however, are suitable for the initial log cabin.

A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON FURNISHINGS  
FOR TURKEY RUN FARM

The purpose of this report is to provide an initial list of items needed to furnish the Turkey Run Farm. The household goods and farm implements mentioned in this report are items that appeared frequently on low-income farms in Fairfax County, Virginia, during the late colonial period and have been documented by a sampling of inventory assessments as recorded by the courts ( See Willbooks, A through C, Fairfax County Court Records).

Some limitations were encountered in using inventories and appraisements from Fairfax County as a basis for a furnishing plan. Court inventories tend to group certain items in categories too general for identification and offer less than a complete listing of goods and chattels. During the intervening time between the date of the decedent's death and the date of appraisement, it is known that items were removed from farm sites through distribution as part of bequests and were also consumed or placed in locations inaccessible to appraisers. The court inventories included only those items showed to the appraisers and fail

to reflect the age of the decedent -- a factor which would have influenced the quantity and type of possessions. Considering these limitations, additional research into other primary source material is necessary for the eventual development of a more comprehensive list of furnishings for Turkey Run Farm.

### The Sampling of Inventories

Twenty-six estate inventories were selected for use in developing a composite list of items seemly suitable for Turkey Run Farm. These inventories, as recorded with the court of Fairfax County, spanned a fifteen year period. Thirteen inventories covered a nine year period prior to 1773, while thirteen listings spanned a six year period immediately after 1773.

#### Estate Inventories

##### A Time Span

---

1765	1766	1767	1768	1769	1770	1771	1772	1773	1774	1775	1776	1777	1778	1779	1780
2	4	0	4	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	4	2	1	3	0

---

The inventory lists chosen from microfilm were all clearly legible. The primary criteria for the sampling though was the apparent economic background of the deceased. The items in each of the inventory lists needed to be appropriate for farming activities. Some of the inventories, however, did suggest supplemental incomes. For example, the James Prescott Estate, valued at £ 62, contained 5 hoes, 20 hogs, 5 head of cattle, 7 pigs and 4 horses and a colt in addition to an unusually large amount of shoemaker's equipment. While shoemaker's paraphernalia appeared in various inventories, the high value of such equipment in Prescott's estate and his relatively low economic position raised some questions as to his former occupation and supplemental economic activities. Despite such reservations, information can be extrapolated from the Prescott inventory regarding the furnishings of a low income freeholder. It is evident from this estate, however, that interpreting inventory lists without further research into the background of each individual involves considerable speculation.

The initial intention of this furnishing project was to select estates appraised at less than £ 65. This was to be in keeping with the economic position of the Turkey Run farmer. Ten suitable inventories were located in the Fairfax County records yet several were of insufficient detail for an adequate item sample. For example, the John Ward Estate listed "a parcel of plantation tools (£ 0 11 0)" which apparently included such items as a hoe and saw, two articles included with a high degree of regularity in most inventories. To obtain greater detail and to get a larger sampling, estates valued at less than £ 280 were

included. Those estates valued over £65 were used primarily to supplement the information obtained from the smaller holdings.

The appearance of negro slaves in nine of the estate inventories chosen for this study led to additional thought as to the appropriateness of these listings, considering the economic position of the farmer at Turkey Run. Four of these inventories listed only one slave; two females, one male and one of indeterminable sex. The estate of Benj. Gray, valued at approximately £155, contained two slaves, one male and one "wench". The combined value of the two slaves was £77. Two other estates contained three negroes: the Owen Williams Estate, appraised at £266, included three negro males worth £165; the Sheridine Inventory listed two negro men and one girl valued at £185 which was nearly one-half of the appraised value of the estate. Two estates each listed five negroes: David Piper's holdings, valued at £185, included one man, one woman, two girls and one boy with a total appraisement of £125; John Ashford likewise had five slave -- two women, two girls and one boy -- accounting for £131 of the total estate's value of £279.

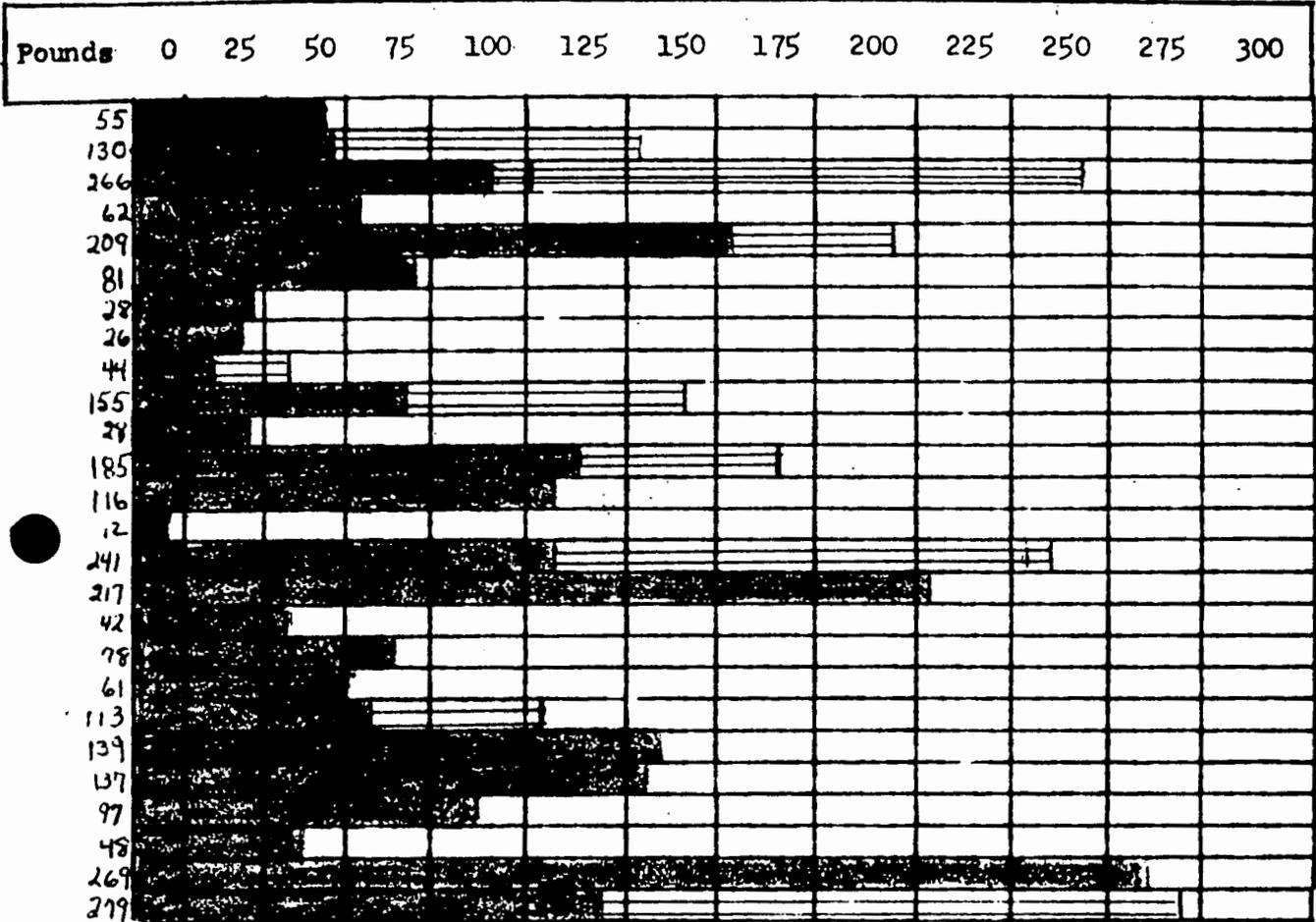
Two observations about the slave-holding estates are worth noting. First, women were the most numerous sex and the least valuable. Yet more important, the value of the furnishings of the nine slave holders fall within the range of the wealthier non-slave holding estates included in this inventory study.

Having briefly discussed the method for selecting inventories, some mention needs to be made concerning the technique of data compilation. A chart was devised to show the frequency of appearance of items listed in the selected inventories. Over 150 categories

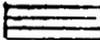
were used, covering those articles appearing most often. The categories ranged from specific ones such as a "man's saddle" to more general ones like "a parcel of woodenware." The different categories formed the vertical axis of the chart while the different inventories were listed horizontally.

Considerable care was taken to include specific characteristics of each inventoried item. For example, the Clifton Estate included "one blackwalnut table." This piece was placed in the category of "tables". Both the value of the table and the type of wood was also included. Individual values were listed, whenever possible, to assist in determining the quality and composition of certain items.

INVENTORY VALUES



 Estate values exclusive of slaves

 Appraised value of slaves

The Selection of Items for Turkey Run Farm

The selection of general items suitable for the farm was based on two related criteria, the assessed value of certain items and its frequency of appearance in the selected inventories. A four point rating scale was devised as an aid in determining the frequency of appearance and the suitability of items for the farm at Turkey Run. Estates valued at less than £65, excluding slaves, were assigned to Group A. Twelve estates were included in this group, only two listed slaves as property. All twenty-six inventories were included in Group B. Each item was assigned a numerical rating ranging from one to four:

Group A

Items appearing in 75% of the estates or more  
( 9 estates or more).....A1  
 Items appearing in 50% of the estates but less  
than 75%  
( 6 to 8 ).....A2  
 Items appearing in 25% but less than 50%  
( 3 to 5 ).....A3  
 Items appearing in less than 25% of the estates  
( 2 or less).....A4

Group B

Items appearing in 75% of the estates or more  
( 19½ or more).....B1  
 Items appearing in 50% of the estates but less  
than 75%  
( 13 to 19).....B2  
 Items appearing in 25% but less than 50%  
( 6½ to 12).....B3  
 Items appearing in less than 25% of the estates  
( 6 or less).....B4

The recommended guide to acquisition contains a composite list of the most frequently appearing items, based on a sample of inventories from Fairfax County. An attempt was made to have the total number and kinds of items to be located at Turkey Run Farm closely resemble the individual inventories in Group A. This was done in an attempt to keep the farm from being over-furnished.

The furnishing list contains several items that had a low frequency rating. A justification for including such items is presented. Descriptions from the inventories are included occasionally in the itemized list for the farm. Little attempt is made, however, to present a detailed description of each item because of the difficulty in documenting the household goods and farm implements of yeomen farmers in eighteenth-century Virginia. Decisions regarding the appropriate styles and specific detail of individual articles are left to the professionals in the field.

✓ 1. ONE BIBLE (A3B3) Anglican. *Optional*

Four estate inventories in Group A specifically mentioned Bibles, sermons or prayer books, others used a more general heading such as "a parcel of books." While references to Bibles are not very frequent, a Bible would be a valuable interpretive aid and certainly would be in keeping with the religious tone of tidewater Virginia.

2. ONE GUN (A3B2) Fowling piece, smoothbore flintlock or possibly a first pattern Brown Bess musket.

The rating difference between Group A and Group B is partly due to the higher average income of the latter group. The value of a gun in the lower income group averaged just under £1. Despite the low rating, the abundance of game in the Potomac watershed and the nature of the militia system in Virginia would make such an item most appropriate for the program at Turkey Run.

3. ONE WOOLEN WHEEL (A1B1) See comment for No. 4.

4. ONE FLAX WHEEL (A2B2)

Some difficulty arose in the compilation of the data on spinning wheels and related items. On several occasions mention was made only of a "spinning wheel" rather than using the more specific terms of linen or woollen. In these cases, the existence of a supply of wool or flax, sheep, sheep shears or a parcel of linen material provides some clues as to the type of spinning wheel. It was taken into consideration that wool can be spun on a flax wheel while the reverse is not true.

5. ONE HATCHEL AND ONE PAIR OF WOOL CARDERS

Despite a high appearance rate for woolen wheels, the related paraphernalia appeared less often, flaxbrake and hatchels (A4B3) and wool carders (A3B3).

6. ONE CHEST (A1B1) Wood without metal hinges, no drawers.

All but one inventory included at least one chest or trunk. A distinction was not made between a simple blanket chest and a chest of drawers. Several of the chests in Group A were listed as small, nearly all were described as old. The estates with a value of more than £65 generally listed two or more chests. Occasionally, a chest listed in an inventory from Group B was described as being iron bound. Differences in economic status rather than sizes of family seemed to account for the variations in the number of chests. Trunks (A3B3) appeared less often.

7. ONE TABLE (A1B1) Eating table, pine planked or possibly a black-walnut table with an oval design.

Twenty-five per cent of the estates listed in Group A and fifty per cent in Group B listed two or more tables. In deriving these figures, the category "table" (A1B1) was combined with category "small table" (A4B4). Oval tables appeared in several of the inventories from Group A, though this type of table occurred more often among the listings of wealthier estates. Only one table was listed as planked. The tables not specifically described as oval were probably planked and rectangular in shape. The higher assessment for oval tables seems to support this assumption. Despite the numerous references to oval tables, a simple pine planked table of sufficient length to seat six or eight would

seem more appropriate for placement at Turkey Run.

8. ONE BENCH (A4B4) Wooden, see comment for No. 9.

9. THREE CHAIRS (A2B2) Possibly ladder-back with cane seat.

There are only two listings of benches, none in Group A, and only four references to stools, twice in Group A. Chairs appeared most frequently among the different types of furniture for sitting. All but two of the estates with chairs listed more than one; the two single listings came from Group A. Considering the size of the family at Turkey Run and the average holdings of more than four chairs, placement of three chairs in the house would be in keeping with the economic position of its occupants. Detailed description of chairs in Group A was lacking. Flag chairs were mentioned twice in inventories from Group B, one elbow chair and two leather chairs were also listed.

10. ONE BED, BEDSTEAD HIDE AND CORD See comment for No. 13.

11. ONE FEATHERBED, BEDSTEAD HIDE AND CORD See comment for No. 13.

12. ONE BOLSTER, ONE BEDSHEET, TWO BLANKETS See comment for No. 13.

13. ONE RAG RUG

"Bed and furniture" was listed two or more times in nearly every household inventory. "Bed, bedstead hide and cord" was also listed frequently. Despite the high value placed on feathers by court appointed

assessors, nearly forty per cent of the inventories in Group A included one or more featherbeds. The majority of the estates in Group A listed two or more beds and furniture. The size of the initial residential structure at Turkey Run will limit the number of beds to two. Related items such as bolters and bedsheets are generally grouped together with the listing of "bed and furniture". Rugs are specifically mentioned frequently enough to be appropriate for the site. Only two quilts or coverlets were listed in the inventories, none in Group A. Further research will be needed to document any common usage of quilts among lower income farming households.

14. ONE LOOKING GLASS (A3B2) Small, OPTIONAL.

Five of the estates in the lower income group included looking glasses. Prices on the average ranged from one to five shillings.

15. ONE CANDLESTICK (A3B3) Iron or wooden.

Five of the inventories from Group A included one or more candlesticks. More significant was the lack of entry in over fifty per cent of the estates in both groups. Candlesticks were included possibly in such general headings as a "parcel of woodenware" or a "parcel of old iron". No references are made in the inventories to wall sconces. One candlestick was described as tin, two as brass and one as iron. Only one reference to a candle mold was found among the twenty-six inventories.

16. ONE DUTCH OVEN (A3B3) Insufficient evidence as to whether tin or iron was the most prevalent material.

Considerable difficulty arose as to the appropriateness of a dutch oven. The low frequency rating may in part be due to the existence of built in walls ovens in some homes in Fairfax County. For cooking demonstrations this items is most useful.

17. ONE FRYING PAN (A2B1) Iron, long handle .

A frying pan was a common item found in the inventories. Its value averaged about two to four shillings based upon low income estates. Only a few references to more than one frying pan was found, most in Group B. In addition to these pans, three estates included griddles while eight inventories listed skillets (A3B3).

18. ONE CHAIN HANGER See comment for No. 21.

✓ 19. ONE TRAMMEL OR HOOK-AND-EYE See comment for No. 21. *Optional*

20. TWO IRON POT HOOKS (A1B1) See comment for No. 21.

21. THREE IRON POTS (A1B1) One large and two small.

The number of pots listed in inventories from Group A averaged approximately two and one-half. Since many of the lists used a more general category such as "pots" or "a parcel of old iron", selection of three pots for the farmstead at Turkey Run seems justifiable.

22. ONE POT (A2B2) Earthen, quart size.

Of the pots not specifically listed as iron, earthenware was the most frequently mentioned type. It seems certain that some earthenware

pots were also included in another category, "a parcel of earthenware."

23. ONE TEA POT (A3B3) Tin, OPTIONAL.

While only three inventories in Group A mentioned teapots, additional listings of tea cannisters and the broader category of "pots" suggest a broader usage by low income freeholders. Considering the political importance of tea during the years immediately preceding the American Revolution, a tea pot might be included at Turkey Run as a special interpretive aid.

24. ONE WOODEN PAIL (A3B3) To hold approximately one gallon, see comment for No. 25.

25. ONE PIGGIN (A3B3).

Pails and "pigeons" were usually listed together in the inventories. In several instances, a tin pail was specifically mentioned. It is apparent, however, that wooden pails were more prevalent. Over thirty per cent of the inventories in both groups listed a "pail and pigeon".

26. ONE LADLE (A3B3) long handled, iron.

Eleven estates listed one or more ladles. Two ladles were referred to as being iron. Iron ladles in some of the inventories were probably included in the heading "a parcel of iron".

27. ONE TRAY (A2B2) Wood bread tray.

28. ONE BOWL (A3B3) Wood, burlled if possible.

While only two bowls, both in Group A, were described as wooden, this

type of bowl is appropriate for the Turkey Run Farm. A separate listing in most inventories -- "a parcel of woodenware" -- apparently included many cooking and eating utensils such as a crude burlled bowl.

29. TWO FLESH HOOKS (A3B3) Iron.

These items were generally listed as a "parcel of flesh hooks". The frequency rating for flesh hooks might have been higher had the category of "a parcel of old iron" not been included in most inventories.

30. ONE PAIR OF IRON FIREDOGS (A4B4) With provision for an iron spit, OPTIONAL.

References to firedogs or andirons were infrequent. Firetongs were listed in five inventories, two in Group A. It seems that fireplace equipment was very limited though possibly it was included occasionally in the "parcel of old iron". Soapstone could be used as log supports and would be very appropriate considering the local supply of this natural stone.

31. ONE BASIN (A3B3) Pewter, OPTIONAL.

Of the four inventories from Group A listing basins, three used the term pewter in describing it. Similarly, six of ten inventories in Group B described basins as being made of pewter. A pewter basin still is probably not in keeping with the normal household goods of a struggling yeoman farmer.

32. ONE LARGE WOODEN DISH See comment for No. 35.

33. ONE SMALL WOODEN DISH See comment for No. 35.

34. FOUR SMALL EARTHENWARE PLATES See comment for No. 35.

✓ 35. TWO SMALL PEWTER PLATES *Optional*

Only a few dishes and plates were listed specifically in the inventories. Of the dishes mentioned, most were described as pewter or delphware. Apparently, most dishes and plates were wooden and earthenware, thus were included in such general categories as "a parcel of woodenware" and "a parcel of earthenware". The number of dishes and plates for Turkey Run have been arbitrarily fixed, based primarily on the size of the family and their economic position.

36. MUGS, CUPS AND WATER VESSELS INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE.

37. SPOONS (A2B2) One wooden, six pewter and one large wooden. Sufficient evidence based on this sampling of estates valued below £65 indicates widespread usage of pewter as a composition for spoons.

38. KNIVES (A1B1) Five total, insufficient evidence as to the type of material, possibly iron with bone handles. See comment for No. 39.

39. FORKS (A1B1) Six total, insufficient evidence as to the type of material, possibly iron with bone handles.

Knives and forks were generally listed together in a combined assessment. When these items were listed separately, forks usually outnumbered knives. Unlike spoons, it is apparent that knives and forks were not usually made out of pewter, the valuations were too low.

40. ONE BOX IRON AND TWO HEATERS (A2B2).

Of the various irons, a box iron and heaters was clearly the most common style in both inventory groups.

41. TWO JUGS (A2B3) One stone jug, gallon size.  
One stone jug, quart size.

Most inventories in Group A listed two or more jugs. Several were listed as "earthen jugs" though "stone jugs" were the most frequently mentioned.

42. ONE MEAL SIFTER (A4B3) Wooden frame with hair mesh, OPTIONAL.

Nine estates listed sifters with most specifying "meal sifters".

Only two of these references were in Group A. The abundance of corn and wheat would make such an item most useful in kitchen work. The meal sifter belonging to a poor freeholder may have been of such a primitive design and construction that it was listed among the "parcel of woodenware."

43. TUBS (A1B1) One large tub with wooden staves and bands.  
One small tub with wooden bands and staves.

Most inventories listed two or more tubs. Some were described as a powdering or washing tub.

44. TWO WET BARRELS Must be tight for storing, <sup>such items as</sup> salted meat and fish.45. FIVE SLACK OR DRY BARRELS

50. ONE RAWHIDE (A3B3) Cow or deer.

Eleven inventories mentioned hides. Deer and cow hides were the most prevalent type.

51. ONE ANIMAL BELL (A3B2) For a horse or cow.

Cow and horse bells were often referred to in the inventories. The quantity of bells normally varied from one to three, though there was considerably greater variation in the number of livestock. The inventories in Group A tended to include the fewest number of animal bells.

52. ONE PADLOCK (A3B3) OPTIONAL.

Only eight inventories listed padlocks with most being in Group B. The problem of security at the Turkey Run site might necessitate the inclusion of a padlock as part of the furnishings.

53. ONE CART (A3B3) OPTIONAL.

The average value of carts based on this inventory sampling was around \$2. It is clear that the wheels were the most important and valuable part of the cart, and were used as a base for tax assessment.

Only three inventories in Group A listed either carts or cart wheels. In Group B, three inventories listed only cart wheels while five other inventories specifically mentioned carts.

54. ONE AX (A2B2)

A second ax is optional. Twelve of the fifteen estate inventories listing axes mentioned two or more. A broad ax, a narrow ax and a cooper's ax were mentioned. The number of inventories listing axes would probably been higher had not general categories such as "

parcel of plantation tools" or "a parcel of carpenter's tools" been used.

55. ONE CROSSCUT SAW (A3B2).

Thirteen of the inventories listed saws, most were described as cross-cut. More of the estates probably had saws yet the fact was obscured by the use of general tool categories.

56. ONE PAIR OF IRON WEDGES (A2B2)

Nearly three-fourths of the wedges were described as iron rather than wood. A pair or set of wedges was the most common listing.

57. TWO HOES (A2B2) One hilling hoe and one grubbing hoe with hickory handles.

A grubbing hoe appeared consistently among the inventories which separately listed hoes. The broad or hilling hoe was also common. Only three of the inventories mentioned one hoe, the number of hoes normally ranged from three to five.

58. ONE PLOW AND HARNESS (A2B2) Including coulter, stock, clevis and harness.

The following is a list of plows taken from the inventories:

Group A    One plow and coulter, strap and clevis  
             One plow and harness  
             Two old plows  
             Two old plows and clevis  
             One old plow  
             One old plow  
             Two old plows

Group B    One plow and clevis  
             Two old plow shears and one colter, one old plow shear & stock  
             One plough and stock  
             One plow

One plow and colter  
One plow, some plows  
One plow, one plow harness  
Some old plow gear  
same { One fluke plow, one fluke plow stock and clevis  
estate { One duck bill plow and clevis  
          { One old fluke plow and colter

The following is a summary list of furnishings to be placed at Turkey Run Farm. Items previously mentioned as optional for acquisition are not included below. The numbers used in the summary list correspond to those in the detailed report and can be used for cross-reference purposes.

- ✓ 1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. One Gun, fowling piece, smoothbore, flintlock
3. One Woolen Wheel
4. One Flax Wheel
5. One Hatchel and One Pair of Wool Carders
6. One Chest, wood without metal hinges, no drawers
7. One Table, pine planked, seating for six or eight
8. One Wooden Bench
9. Three Chairs, possibly ladder-backed with cane seats.
10. One Bed, Bedstead Hide and Cord
11. One Featherbed, Bedstead Hide and Cord
12. One Bolster, One Bedsheet and Two Blankets
13. One Rag Rug
14. \_\_\_\_\_
15. One Candlestick, wood or iron
16. One Dutch Oven, iron
17. One Frying Pan, long handled, iron
18. One Chain Hanger, for kitchen pots
19. \_\_\_\_\_
20. Two Iron Pot Hooks

21. Three Iron Pots, one large and two small
22. One Pot, earthen, quart size
- 23.
24. One Wooden Pail, to hold approximately one gallon
25. One Piggin
26. One Ladle, long handled, iron
27. One Tray, wood bread tray
28. One Bowl, burlled wood
29. Two Flesh Hooks, iron
- 30.
- 31.
32. One Large Wooden Dish
33. One Small Wooden Dish
34. Four Small Earthenware Plates
35. -----
- 36.
37. Spoons, one wooden, six pewter and one large wooden
38. Five Knives, not pewter or silver
39. Six Forks, not pewter or silver
40. One Box Iron and Two Heaters
41. Two Jugs, one stone jug, gallon size  
one stone jug, quart size
- 42.
43. Two Tubs, one large tub with wooden staves and bands  
one small tub with wooden staves and bands
44. Two Wet Barrels

45. Five Slack or Dry Barrels
- 46.
47. Two Baskets, One straw basket, approximately one-half bushel  
One winnowing basket
48. One Reap Hook
49. One Man's Saddle and Gear
50. One Rawhide, cow or deer
51. One Animal Bell, for horse or cow
- 52.
- 53.
54. One Ax
55. One Crosscut Saw
56. One Pair of Iron Wedges
57. Two Hoes, one grubbing and one hilling
58. One Plow and Harness