

A Guide to Historic Ceramics in the Antebellum South

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Ceramics play a key role in the analysis of a historic land base under excavation. Historic, as a term, refers to a time after intelligible writing was utilized by a society. This guide focuses on the historic time period of the 18th and 19th centuries in colonial America. Archaeologists and analysts excavating a site that was occupied during these years need to apply a great deal of focus on the ceramic wares they uncover to gather information on the social and economic status of the occupants and calculate an approximate date range for when the site was in use. These facts, among many others, are easily acquired through a basic physical analysis of the excavated ceramics. This guide will primarily address the importance of ceramics for understanding colonial America as a whole, while focusing on the historic land base of the Ames Plantation in West Tennessee as an exemplary excavation site. In addition, a condensed guide for indentifying diverse types of ceramics in America has been included to simplify the analysis process and improve understanding of the various lifestyles of the American people in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Ceramic Analysis

According to archaeologist James Deetz, "Archaeology is the study of past peoples based on the things they left behind and the ways they left their imprint on the world."¹ Among the most common objects uncovered at excavation sites,

ceramics, defined as inorganic, non-metallic materials formed into a pottery type or vessel, are essential for analyzing the society in question.² Pottery is a specific form of ceramic that is manufactured as a container for a wide array of solid and liquid materials. Pottery was originally designed for transporting, cooking, and storing food and supplies, but it has since developed many productive and decorative uses. These artifacts are all made or modeled from a clay substance and then fired for a more durable finish.³ For most archaeologists, ceramics are a pivotal part, if not the most important aspect, of an archaeological excavation, as they are a highly informative form of material culture that are the most well preserved and easily recovered artifacts. Although pottery vessels are fragile, ceramic is a highly indestructible material. Ceramic breaks easily, but the remaining fragments are greatly unaffected by corrosion and discoloration.⁴ As pottery preserves well when buried but tends to get broken quickly by those who own and use it, it can be assumed that a piece found buried had not been broken or discarded long after its manufacturing. Thus, to date the ware would give a highly accurate date of occupation for the site.

Types of ceramics found in the colonies were determined by four main factors: availability, need, function, and social status. Before the 1700s, American colonists depended on England to acquire ceramic wares. Problems of availability limited the amount of pottery in the colonies until craftsmen and industries began to produce local variations of the wares brought from Europe. Since ceramics are fragile, colonists making the journey to America most likely did not bring many vessels with them in their personal belongings. Trading organizations established

between the colonies and Europe therefore made a noticeable difference in which wares were found in homes. If availability was not an issue, a problem that was remedied when local wares were manufactured along with the English imports, the necessity of a particular type of pottery dictated what would be used. Need for a certain type of ware correlates with the function of the object.⁵

Pottery is fundamentally utilitarian; therefore, it directly illustrates everyday characteristics of the past life in which it was used.⁶ The individuality and value of various aspects of pottery provides information about many important characteristics of American society including, but not limited to, the social status of those who owned the ceramics, the economic relations of ceramics to food consumption, and the trading and selling of wares in different areas around the country.⁷

Studying the type of ceramic wares found in a house may provide some insight into the occupant's social status, as various pottery forms reflect different levels of wealth. Chinese porcelain, for example, was more expensive, imported and traded the farthest, and the most rare of the wares found on American excavation sites. The presence of porcelain would indicate a higher social and economic status, as only the wealthy would be able to afford it. Whiteware, on the other hand, was more readily available and cost less to produce and acquire. Finding only whiteware at a site would suggest that the owner was less affluent than those who owned a significant amount of nicer wares. Though the type of ware found suggests status, finding a substantial amount of variety in the wares could actually imply

either a higher or lower status. If there is a wide array of ceramic types, it is possible that the occupant of the site kept their older pottery after acquiring new types, though each type would be found in a large set, displaying a greater sense of wealth. On the other hand, a plantation owner may have given his slaves an assortment of leftover ceramic vessels to use. This would result in a large quantity of pottery, but the lack of uniformity and incomplete ceramic sets would suggest a lower social status.

In accordance with determining the social status of the owner, ceramics played a major role in determining the foodways of the people. A term coined by folklorist Jay Anderson, *foodways* refers to “the whole interrelated system of food conceptualization, procurement, distribution, preservation, preparation, and consumption shared by all members of a particular group.”⁸ In this way, the type of pottery available determines the food that the owner is capable of producing, and the food available determines the pottery that is sought after. If the foodways in America changed significantly, there would be a noticeable change in the patterns of ceramic use.⁹

Ceramics were not manufactured in America until European ceramists arrived from England, forcing the colonists to acquire their early pottery by economic means. China and Europe were mass-producing ceramic wares by the 18th and 19th centuries. Wealthier American colonists could purchase quality wares and have them shipped across seas. Less economically fortunate people were, therefore, forced to rely on unskilled local craftsmen to create crude pieces of

stoneware until European businesses opened. Those that could not afford to purchase their own wares, slaves and poor farm workers, were often given the left over wares that would otherwise have been discarded by the wealthy. An increase in skilled workers provided higher quality local wares that led to people of lower status having better quality products. This then gave them a better quality of life by improving their foodways and sense of social worth.

In addition to ceramics providing information about the social and economic aspects of the people in a society, they can also give archaeologists an idea of when a society was functional. The ability of pottery to easily break, along with its durability in the earth, means that there is a very good chance that any given piece was broken in a relatively short time after it was produced.¹⁰ The manufacturing date of most ceramic types can be determined to within five years or less. This may be beneficial to an archaeologist's analysis because a site can only be dated as early as the earliest deposit uncovered. "Terminus post quem" is the principle of dating artifacts based on the newest object found. For example, a site that does not contain any creamware pottery mostly likely predates the 1770s, since by that time this type of ware had become the most common form of ceramic in both America and England.¹¹

Since the dates of production for many various pottery types are known, it is possible to determine the approximate manufacturing period for any specific ceramic and excavation site where ceramics are found. To do this, archaeologists utilize the *Mean Ceramic Date Formula* developed by Stanley South of the South

Carolina Archaeology and Anthropology Institute. Once an excavation is complete, all of the ceramic fragments should be arranged by type and counted. The organized pottery can be dated by ware type and, therefore, sorted by year of production. After separated and a mean manufacturing date is found for each ware, the midpoint of the period can be determined. For example, if a particular piece of pottery was produced between 1680 and 1720, the mean manufacturing date would be 1700, the year that is halfway between the two dates. Once the mean dates are calculated, they are assigned a level of importance based on the comparative quantity of each ceramic type uncovered at the site. The average of the mean dates can be taken to determine an estimated, but fairly accurate midpoint in the period when the site had been occupied.¹²

Another way to analyze ceramics is by identifying and dating makers' marks. A makers' mark is an identifiable design, usually incorporating the company icon or logo, which designates a specific manufacturer. Makers' marks are sometimes identified as bottom marks, a reference to the location of most marks on the exterior underside of the vessel. Each mark is unique to the company that produced it (examples page 34-5). Although not all ceramic vessels were marked when they went through the manufacturing process, most that came from mass-producers carry these distinct marks that allow an archaeologist to determine where the pottery came from, establish when it was made, and speculate as to how it arrived at the site where it was uncovered.

The practice of putting makers' marks on ceramic vessels goes back hundreds of years. Roman potter M. Perennius, well known for his expertise at reproducing Greek designs for ceramics, was the first to brand his pottery. Many vessels dating between 100 B.C. and A.D. 100 are marked with "M. PERINNI," "M. PEREN," or "M. PERE." Following in his tradition, Perennius's slave who served as a pottery worker, Tigranes, was the next to stamp his work. This practice holds true today as potters around the world mark their wares with an assortment of shapes, symbols, and initials. No two marks are exactly the same, though some companies alter their marks as their business develops and grows. The most well designed and informative makers' marks can be found on British ceramics that were produced following the Industrial Revolution. American ceramists followed suit soon after. Potters across the globe quickly developed a wide array of designs, and after 1770 there were few vessels that did not contain some form of notation of the manufacturer. Historical archaeologists are able to utilize the identifiable features of makers' marks and, most importantly, the compilations of the history of marks, such as Geoffrey Godden's *Encyclopedia of British Pottery and Porcelain Marks*, to date and classify the ceramics they uncover.¹³ For example,

A sherd that is marked with a globe with the word *MINTON* written across it was a product of the Minton pottery of Staffordshire, England. Established in 1793, the Minton pottery used the globe from about 1863 to 1872. In 1873, the Mintons added a crown to the top of the globe and an *S* to the word *MINTON*.¹⁴

Though many manufacturers' marks were individual creations, many English ceramists integrated the British Royal Arms into their mark design. These icons are characterized by a lion and a unicorn that respectively flank the left and right sides

of a shield that has a crown on top of it. Before 1837, the marks included a design with a small shield centered on a larger shield. After this year, the smaller shield was removed to simplify the design.¹⁵

Makers' marks prove to be extremely useful, but there must be a large enough portion preserved for the design to be recognizable. Most uncovered vessels are found in small fragments that contain only miniscule pieces of the mark. In this case, it is the archaeologist's job to isolate the most distinguishable features observable and identify them as best as possible.¹⁶

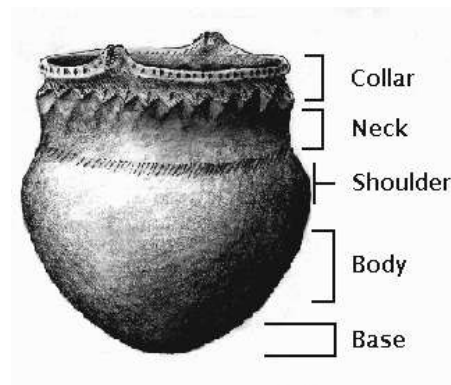
Ceramic analysis and description fall under four main areas: physical properties, composition of materials, technique, and style. There are recognizable relationships between each property, allowing for a more in depth analysis. The physical properties, for example, are directly affected by the materials the pottery is composed of and by the technique used in the creation process. In addition, the material frequently limits the choice of technique, which will in turn affect the style.¹⁷

Archaeologists depend mostly on the physical properties of ceramics to describe, identify, and analyze artifacts. Observable attributes of pottery include color, hardness, texture, and decoration. These properties are easily determined in the field or lab, allowing the analyst to identify the artifact more easily and quickly than they would if required to technologically examine the chemical composition of the material or temperature the vessel was fired in. Physical descriptions are enough to separate and identify every type of ceramic ware from stoneware to

porcelain. Focus on the physical properties also allows for a historical analysis of ceramic technological developments and a chronology of wares found at a site.¹⁸

Color is important in pottery description because most wares are named for the color of their ceramic composition. The color of a piece of pottery is primarily a result of the composition of the clay, the atmosphere, the temperature, and the time period of the firing of the vessel. Resulting color, whether a yellow, brown, white, or other hue, provides an immediate identification of the specific ware. Hardness of the ware refers to the ability of the vessel to resist penetration, cutting, scratching, and crushing. A scratch test can generally give an accurate idea of the vessels hardness. The archaeologist must simply take a knife and make a scratch on a small portion of the fragment. The results will vary depending on the ware and glaze put on it. Knowing how hard the body of the ceramic is provides more insight into the type of ware.¹⁹ The texture of a material reflects the type of glaze that has been put in place over the clay exterior of the ceramic. Varying glazes have been developed for each type of ware, allowing for an array of decorative and productive properties. Decorations are found in a wide variety of forms. Embellishments on ceramics vary depending on the manufacturing process of the ware, the pottery type, and the person who purchases the vessel. Adornments can be placed on the interior or exterior of a vessel but never have truly practical benefits. The decoration, however, may provide additional information on where the ceramic came from and how it was made.

When studying ceramics, it is important to know the various parts of the vessel. *Rim sherds* are fragments of the rim or mouth of a piece of pottery. These pieces denote how the vessel may have been finished and the overall size of the piece. The *collar* is located between the rim and the neck and may contain various forms of decoration. The *base* is the bottom of the pottery and is a good indicator of the overall shape of the ceramic. Base pieces can be flat, rounded, or pointed. The transition area where the form of the vessel transforms as the body ends and the neck begins is the *shoulder*. Between the shoulder and the rim is called the *neck*. A vessel's *body* is the main portion of the piece and will also give some indication about the overall shape and size of the ceramic.²⁰



Knowing the various parts of a ceramic vessel allows the archaeologist and analyst the opportunity to reconstruct the vessel from both small and large fragments. As each piece provides specific insight into the size, shape, type, and use of the piece, the smallest fragment can tell much about the ceramic as a whole. Larger fragments are occasionally found in close proximity to each other and can sometimes fit together to create a whole piece of pottery (see page 32). Though this is rare due to changes in the earth and tampering with a site before excavation,

these findings allow the archaeologist the opportunity to actually observe a whole piece rather than speculate what it looked like before it was broken. Having a complete, or nearly complete, vessel makes analyzing a piece of pottery much easier due to less speculation and a direct example of the full ware. Full makers' marks are often found on these vessels as well, providing first-hand information on the manufacturing of the ceramic.

Future ceramic analysis will be defined by increasing technological developments. A study by archaeologist Dr. Robert Cargill argues that digital reconstruction of archaeological remains will make analysis easier and is slowly becoming more prevalent around the world. Virtual reality software takes uncovered ceramic fragments and digitally arranges them together to create possible vessels. Though this technology is still new, it has been tested on a site in Qumran to display the types of wares that were originally used there. This test case will hopefully set the pace for the future development and use of this technology. The virtual reconstruction process catalogues archaeological information in a way that permits the combination of contending architectural reconstruction with the chronological development of a site.²¹

Types of Historic Ceramics

There are three types of historic ceramics found on American excavation sites: earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain. Earthenware was manufactured in England before the medieval period but was not produced in America until the 1620s. This ware can be identified by its soft, impermeable body that is made

absorbent by glazing. The glaze most commonly used was comprised of either lead sulfide or lead oxide with additives to allow for color or opacity, as a purely lead glaze would be transparent and colorless. Earthenware is easily decorated. It is made mostly of potters' clay or earth and is not vitrified, or fired to produce a glassy finish.²² Stoneware is a hard-bodied ceramic that does not require a glaze to be impermeable. A salt glaze was frequently added, however, to give the ceramic a smoother, glassier shell. This allowed the vessel to be more aesthetically pleasing while also making it easier to clean. Porcelain is an extremely vitrified white ceramic composed of kaolin, a special type of clay. Like, earthenware and stoneware, porcelain has a hard body and is resistant to water. Unlike the other wares, however, it is translucent when held up to a light.²³

Chinese porcelain is the oldest and most elaborate of the wares found in colonial America. As early as A.D. 500, white porcelain clay was utilized in China. It was not until 1400, however, that Chinese porcelain was found in European capitals. Because it was very expensive to import such a long distance, porcelain ceramics were predominantly purchased by European nobility to display their wealth and decorate their living quarters. Though European ceramists attempted to recreate the product, they were unsuccessful in making quality reproductions. They were, however, able to produce a white porcelain from the materials available to them. This led to a porcelain that could be easily decorated and that was cheaper to make and more readily available. Although it was not as high quality as the vessels that were brought from China, artificial porcelain, as it was sometimes described, spread through Europe and, eventually, America. By the late 1800s, America began

manufacturing porcelain by its own expert artisans, making it a truly global ware type.²⁴

Stoneware, manufactured as early as 1540, was a less valuable and more easily produced form of ceramic. Unlike porcelain, which was only created with a white, glossy finish, stoneware has been uncovered with a hard body in many colors, including gray, white, tan, red, and black. The earliest stonewares were manufactured in Europe and were referred to as Rhenish Wares. Later American ceramists attempted to reproduce stoneware vessels, but manufactured them in a much heavier and more utilitarian fashion. Stoneware had a variety of decorative aspects, though it could be found unadorned with a simple salt glaze.²⁵

Until the eighteenth century ceramics imported to America included Dutch and English delft, French faience, and various stonewares. There were many vastly different types of ceramics manufactured all around Europe. At the end of the eighteenth century, Staffordshire gained dominance over the world ceramics market. Specialization of skills, factory organization, and regulation of vessel and ware types emerged at this time, increasing production while simultaneously lowering costs. In the late 1700s, Josiah Wedgwood consolidated ceramic manufacturing with his development and refinement of plain cream-colored earthenware. Queen Charlotte of England was one of the first to place an order of this ceramic type, prompting Wedgwood to christen the product “Queen’s ware.” It later universally adopted the title creamware for its cream-colored exterior. Orders of creamware from elite

society gave the ceramic a reputable social status that allowed it, an earthenware, to compare with porcelain as sought-after tea and tableware.

Earthenwares had previously been considered ceramics of lower status, while porcelains were higher-grade wares produced in a limited market. Wedgwood marketed creamwares for members of every class, with high quality pieces made specifically for the royalty and plainer wares for common people of lower status. This allowed creamware to emerge as the dominant ceramic type in the world market. Most of the older kinds of ware were quickly eliminated, leading to more uniformity of description in ceramics. Rather than having to identify a piece out of many varying types of ware, descriptions were reduced to simple explanations of decoration. Standard terms of report after 1780 included the following: *CC* for cream-colored, *edged* for shell-edged, *printed* for transfer printed, *dipped* for mocha and banded, *painted* for hand-painted, etc. More commonly found in American excavation sites dated to up to the 1770s, this ceramic type led the way for the development of other earthenwares found in America after the Civil War.²⁶

In 1779, after experimenting with the manufacture of a ware that would be whiter than creamware, Wedgwood developed what he termed “Pearl White” or “pearlware.” The body of this ware was coated with a glaze that included a small amount of cobalt, which eliminated the natural yellow tint found in creamware. Though Wedgwood did not produce a large quantity of pearlware, many other manufacturers adopted the type allowing it to spread as an important earthenware along with creamware. Pearlware is the most common ceramic type uncovered on

sites from the early nineteenth century. It can be distinguished from late versions of creamware by the blue appearance of its glaze in crevices and around the handles. Creamware glaze, comparatively, has a yellow or green tint in the cracks.²⁷

A decade later, in 1800, a family in Lane End, Staffordshire took out a patent for a new method of producing ceramics. The established partnership was terminated in 1806 due to bankruptcy, but Charles James Mason registered the patent in 1813, renaming the ceramic ware type “ironstone.” Though he did not invent the material, Mason coined the term that identifies the product to this day. Ironstone is an extremely dense earthenware that contains china stone in the clay body. The bluish color and hardness of the exterior bear a resemblance to Chinese porcelain. Ironstone is always opaque, however, not translucent like porcelains. It has a softer glaze than previous wares, allowing for decoration in both the underglaze and overglaze enamels. Much like Chinese porcelain, Ironstone is less susceptible to splintering or cracking around the edges, an improvement when compared to its pearlware predecessor.²⁸

Emerging after pearlware and creamware as the most prevalent and cost-efficient of the earthenwares, whiteware is uncovered more than any other ceramic type on southern excavation sites from the late 19th century on. Whiteware was never really invented, but it evolved from its predecessors.²⁹ This ceramic type was easily manufactured in America, providing colonists a cheaper alternative to the wares they had to import from over seas. Whiteware was also less expensive to produce in mass quantities and was acquired by people of both lower and higher

classes. Its significantly white exterior body, when measured against the wares that were developed before it, identifies this ceramic. It is comparably as white as porcelain, but it is opaque and will adhere with all forms of decoration. Whiteware is found both plain or adorned with various decorative elements. These enhancements include, but are not limited to, transfer printed, handpainted, and annular dipped embellishments.

Transfer printed imagery requires an adherent surface to be applied. Wares such as stoneware, creamware, and whiteware work well with this form of decoration. These designs are created to be reproduced multiple times, often for large sets of wares. An illustration is first made and then created into a mold. This mold is then dipped in a paint-like substance and set on the already fired ceramic vessel. When the mold is removed, the image is left imprinted on the ware. This type of print is identifiable by the tiny dots of paint from the mold that make the resulting picture on the ware and the appearance that the design is set on top of the glaze. Transfer print is most commonly found in blue or black, but it was sometimes produced in red, green, purple, and yellow.

Still highly decorative, hand-painted polychrome adornment was also highly valued in the 19th century. Ceramic wares with this form of embellishment were less prevalent because they were not mass-produced by large companies. Two forms, floral and sprig, were the most common decorations. Floral generally included a specific flower type, while sprig had patterns of leaves that adorned the

outer rim of the ware. Like the dots that designate transfer print, brush strokes from being painted by hand are easily recognizable.

Annular dipped ware is easily identified by a ring or series of rings encompassing a vessel. Some annular decorations simply involve a single band that wraps around the rim of the ware. Others display repetitive rings that run the extent of the entire vessel. This decoration is typically monochrome, but polychrome annular is occasionally found, though usually only with fewer and larger rings.

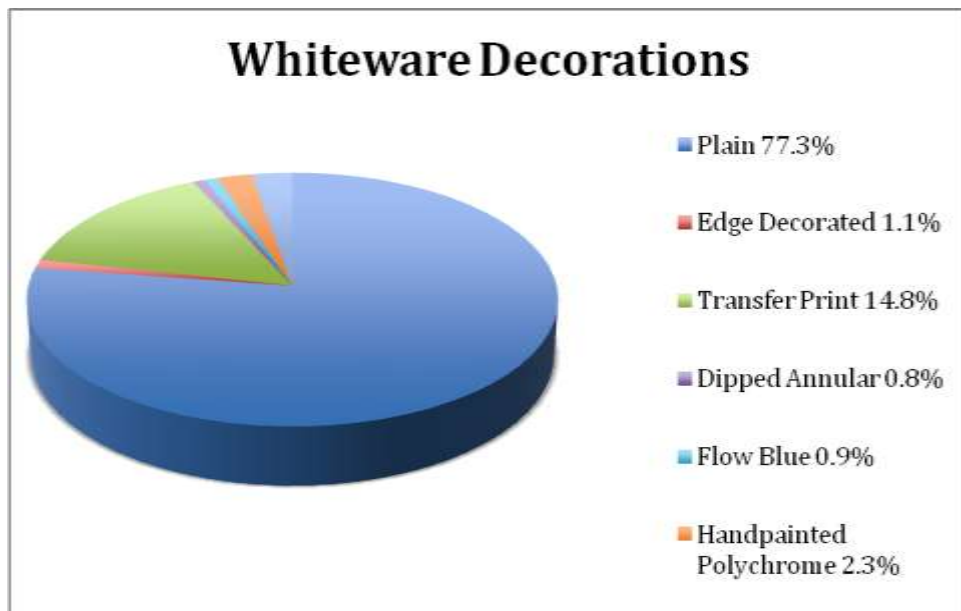
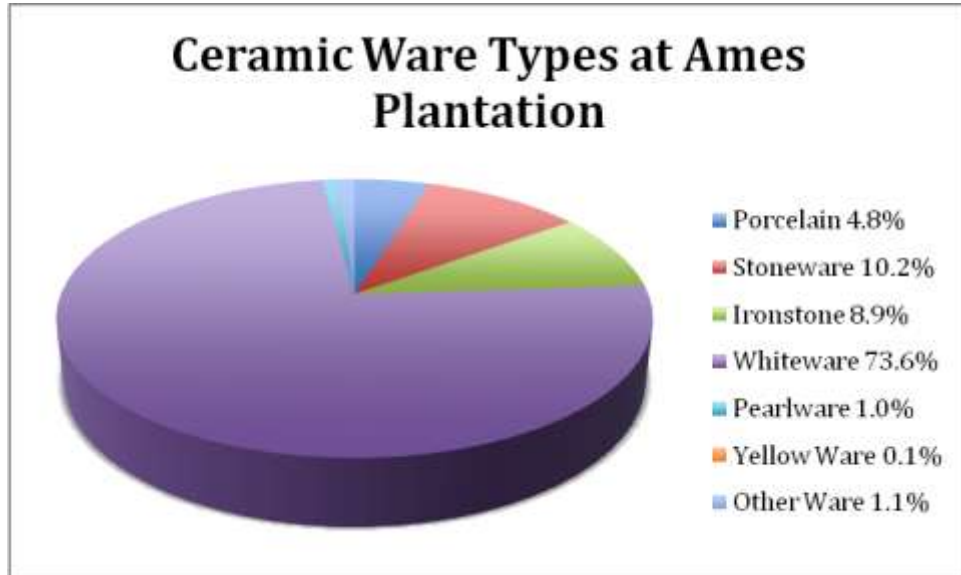
Ceramics at Ames

The Ames Plantation covers 18,400 acres of land in Fayette and Hardeman counties in Tennessee. It is home to a broad spectrum of historic ceramics and gives a significant illustration of when, where, and how ceramic pottery was acquired and utilized on southern plantations in the 1800s. Archaeology students from Rhodes College and the University of Memphis have been excavating antebellum sites across the plantation. Students have excavated three historic sites on a land base owned by Beverly and Eugenia Holcombe between 1834 and 1842. Displaying small segments of the original 900 acres of land, these sites were once occupied by the cabins and out buildings of the original owners. Holcombe I, the first excavation site labeled as Site 40FY446 (site labeling explained on page 36), contained what can be speculated to be a cabin or detached kitchen. This site is unique because of the cellar found below the surface, which still held and preserved a vast array of antebellum artifacts. The nearest site, Holcombe III or Site 40FY298, was also excavated though

no outstanding architectural elements were uncovered. Analysis of the artifact remains that were discovered, however, suggest that the site had been inhabited by a cabin or like building at some point in the late 19th or early 20th century. The third site, Holcombe II or Site 40FY281, is currently under excavation and contains over 20 architectural elements that form the remnants of a cabin or manor house from the late 19th century. Ceramic artifact analysis shows that the site was only occupied through the antebellum period, as no post-bellum artifacts have been uncovered. Middle Woodlands pottery intermixed with the historic ceramics suggests that the area served as a village site for Native Americans before English colonization reached Tennessee.

The resulting finds have given significant insight into the lives of the people occupying the homes on southern plantations in the 19th century. Among the various finds was a vast array of ceramic fragments ranging from Chinese porcelain to American whiteware. Whiteware has been the most predominant ware, but a study of the different decoration types proves that it was neither manufactured from a single company nor was it traded to one family. Whiteware made up nearly 75% of the total wares uncovered at Ames, the other 25% being stoneware, pearlware, porcelain, ironstone, and a small quantity of other types. Further study shows the breakdown of whiteware decoration to reveal the prevalence of plain and transfer print vessels, suggesting the preponderance of mass production at the time of the sites occupation.

The following charts provide a look at the number of ceramic ware types and decoration types found on the Ames Plantation.



Ceramic Types

Porcelain

Identifying Properties:

Dates of Manufacture: 1574-1830 (Chinese), 1750-present (non-Chinese)

Paste: hard, highly vitreous, will not stick to tongue, will not scratch with a knife

Color: pale gray or white

Glaze: sticks well & does not flake off

Decoration: Hand-painted underglaze blue & polychrome (Chinese), transfer print (American)

Form: Commonly thin and smooth

Vessel Types Found: table wares



Plain Porcelain
40FY281
Unit 25
Level 2
109-8



Plain Porcelain (reverse)
40FY281
Unit 25
Level 2
109-8



Hand-painted Polychrome Porcelain
40FY446

Stoneware

Identifying Properties:

Dates of Manufacture: 1540-1900

Paste: hard, non-porous, will only slightly stick to tongue but too heavy to suspend, will not scratch with knife

Color: gray, white, tan, red, or black

Glaze: salt-glaze resulting in dimpled surface most common

Decoration: incised, molded, sprigged, dipped, hand-painted, transfer print

Form: commonly thick and heavy, sometimes thin and delicate

Vessel Types Found: table wares, kitchen and storage vessels



Bristol Slip Stoneware
40FY281



Plain Salt Glaze Grey-bodied Stoneware
40FY281
Unit 22
Level 2
83-18



Plain Salt Glaze Grey-bodied Stoneware (reverse)
40FY281
Unit 22
Level 2
83-18



Plain Salt Glaze Grey-bodied Stoneware (side)
40FY281
Unit 22
Level 2
83-18



Albany Interior Salt Glaze Stoneware
40FY281
Unit 13
Level 2
53-6



Blue Paint Rim Stoneware (reverse)
40FY281
Unit 13
Level 2
53-6



Blue Paint Rim Stoneware (side)
40FY281
Unit 13
Level 2
53-6



Unglazed Buff-Bodied Stoneware
40FY281



Bristol Slip Stoneware
40FY446



Bristol Slip Stoneware (reverse)
40FY446

Creamware

Identifying Properties:

Dates of Manufacture: 1750-1820

Paste: soft, produces powder easily when scratched with a knife, sticks to tongue

Color: Cream/Off-white

Glaze: Clear lead based that results in cream-colored exterior

Decoration: Hand-painted overglaze and underglaze (monochrome and polychrome), transfer print, slip, annular, plain

Form: thick and light

Vessel Types Found: table wares, kitchen vessels

Pearlware

Identifying Properties:

Dates of Manufacture: 1779-1890

Paste: soft, sticks to tongue, produces powder when scratched with a knife

Color: Cream/Off-white, slight blue tint

Glaze: shallow, blue specks sometimes observable, variety of blue tints

Decoration: hand-painted polychrome and blue, transfer print

Form: early-thin, later-thick

Vessel Types Found: table ware, kitchen vessels



Plain Pearlware
40FY281
Unit 6
Level 1
50-11



Finger Painted Pearlware
40FY281
Unit 16
Level 2
67-2



Blue Transfer Print Pearlware
40FY446

Whiteware

Identifying Properties:

Dates of Manufacture: 1830-1900+

Paste: soft, but harder than creamware and pearlware, sticks to tongue, can be marked with a knife

Color: slightly off-white/white

Glaze: clear producing white exterior, deep glaze, may crack

Decoration: Edged, Transfer Print, hand-painted, flow blue

Vessel Types Found: table ware, kitchen vessels



Plain Whiteware
40FY281
Unit 13
Feature 11
68-2



Plain Whiteware
40FY281
Unit 13
Feature 11
68-2



Plain Whiteware
40FY281
Unit 17
Level 2
68-6



Blue Transfer Print Whiteware
40FY281
Unit 27
Level 2
109-12



Blue Transfer Print Whiteware
40FY281
Unit 30
Level 1
106-8



Flow Blue Print Whiteware
40FY281
Unit 19
Feature 18
86-5



Black Transfer Print Whiteware (Makers' Mark)
40FY281
Unit 30
Level 2
122-8



Black Transfer Print Whiteware
40FY281
Unit 31
Level 1
101-12



Black Transfer Print Whiteware (Makers' Mark)
40FY446
Unit 3
Level 2
Feature 2
53-3



Green Transfer Print Whiteware
40FY281
Unit 7
Level 1
35-12



Red Transfer Print Whiteware
40FY446
Unit 6
Level 2
62-12



Blue Scallop/Impressed Edge Decorated
Whiteware
40FY281
Unit 27
Level 2
109-7



Green Scallop/Impressed Edge Decorated
Whiteware
40FY281
Unit 29
Level 1
127-6



Hand-painted Polychrome Whiteware (sprig)
40FY281
Unit 7
Level 1
35-13



Hand-painted Polychrome Whiteware (floral)
40FY281
Unit 32
Level 1
113-9



Hand-Painted Polychrome Whiteware (rim)
40FY281
Unit 22
Level 2
83-5



Dipped Annular Whiteware
40FY281
Unit 27
Level 2
109-13



Annular Whiteware
40FY446
Unit 3
Level 2
Feature 2
63-9

Ironstone

Identifying Properties:

Dates of Manufacture: 1840-1885+

Paste: harder than whiteware, will only slight stick to tongue, will not scratch with a knife

Color: paste tinted blue, gray, or white

Glaze: deeper than whiteware, adheres well



Plain Ironstone
40FY281
Unit 22
Level 1
64-6



Plain Ironstone (reverse)
40FY281
Unit 22
Level 1
64-6



Cobalt Blue Hand-painted Ironstone
40FY446
Unit 6
Level 1
61-13



Black Transfer Print Ironstone
40FY446
ST-14
5-1



Black Transfer Print Ironstone
40FY446
Unit 2
Level 2
Feature 2
64-29



Reconstructed Plain Ironstone (Front and Reverse)



Reconstructed Plain Ironstone (Front and Reverse)

Yellow Ware



Plain Yellow Ware

Makers' Marks



A study of makers' marks, as previously mentioned, gives an archaeologist significant insight into the history of a ceramic ware. From a small fragment of a vessel, it is possible to determine the year the piece was produced, where it was manufactured, what it was used for, and how it arrived on the site where it was uncovered. This particular piece, found at Holcombe I site in Fayette County, Tennessee, has been traced to James Keiller and Son's Dundee Marmalade Company. From the fragment in question, the name Keiller could be identified. This name was taken and compared with makers' marks in a large database, where the name Keiller was identified as one of the top Marmalade producers in England. From the full mark on the complete stoneware jar, it can be determined that James Keiller received the Grand Medal of Merit in Vienna in 1873 and the only Prize Medal for Marmalade in London 1862.³⁰



Like the Marmalade Jar, this makers' mark was found on multiple plates uncovered at Ames. Much like many makers' marks of the 19th century, this mark is adorned with a seal with flanking lions and the words "Ironstone China" across the top. A search for these features, a common theme in pottery after the 1700s based on the British Royal Coat of Arms, would bring a wide array of results. The letters "A" and "P" at the center of the circle, however, is distinctive to this mark and narrows the logo possibilities considerably. This particular piece, according to Kowalsky's *Encyclopedia of Marks*, was manufactured by James E. Norris of the Anchor Pottery in 1894. This company originated in Trenton , New Jersey.³¹

Breakdown of Ceramic Labeling

Example:

40FY281

Unit 25

Level 2

109-6

Site Name: 40FY281

40: State Number (Tennessee)

FY: County (Fayette)

281: Site Number (Holcombe II)

Unit: Excavation sites are divided into 2x2 (yard) square units.

Level: Units are dug down 10 cm at a time to separate the square by elevation levels.

Features: Within the units, distinct elements that are distinguished from the standard soil level are labeled as features.

Identification Number: 109-6

109: The bag number, assigned by unit and level for each excavation site.

6: The artifact number assigned to the ware during analysis and labeling.

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- ¹ Deetz, James. *In Small Things Forgotten*, Anchor, 1996, 4.
- ² American Ceramic Society, *Learn About Ceramics*, <http://ceramics.org/knowledge-center/learn-about-ceramics/>
- ³ Sharer, Robert J. & Ashmore, Wendy, *Archaeology: Discovering Our Past*, McGraw-Hill, 2003, 363.
- ⁴ Deetz, 68.
- ⁵ Deetz, 73-75.
- ⁶ Deetz, 68-9.
- ⁷ Shepard, Anna O. *Ceramics for the Archaeologist*, Braun-Brumfield Inc., 1956, 95.
- ⁸ Deetz, 73.
- ⁹ Deetz, 73-5.
- ¹⁰ Deetz, 68.
- ¹¹ Deetz, 24.
- ¹² Deetz, 25.
- ¹³ Orser, Charles E., *Historical Archaeology*, Pearson Education Inc., 2004.
- ¹⁴ Orser, 98.
- ¹⁵ Orser, 98.
- ¹⁶ Orser, 99.
- ¹⁷ Shepard, 95.
- ¹⁸ Shepard, 100-2.
- ¹⁹ Shepard, 113-4.
- ²⁰ Price, T. Douglas. *Principles of Archaeology*, McGraw-Hill, 2007, 304-5.
- ²¹ Cargill, Robert R. "The Qumran Digital Model: An Argument for Archaeological Reconstruction in Virtual Reality" *Near Eastern Archaeology*, Vol. 72, No. 1 (March 2009)
- ²² Kowalsky, Arnold A. & Dorothy E., *Encyclopedia of Marks 1780-1980.*
- ²³ Deetz, 69-70.
- ²⁴ *History of Porcelain*, <http://www.theartfulcrafter.com/porcelain.html>
- ²⁵ Brown, Ann R., *Historic Ceramic Typology*. U.S. Department of Transportation, 1982., 9.
- ²⁶ Miller, George L. "Marketing Ceramics in North America: An Introduction," *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Spring, 1984), 1-5.
- ²⁷ Hume, Ivor Noel. *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1969. 128-30
- ²⁸ Tharp, Lars. *The Origins of Ironstone*, Thepotteries.org, <http://www.thepotteries.org/features/ironstone.htm>
- ²⁹ Brown, 19.
- ³⁰ <http://www.sportingcollectibles.com/antiques/ap9487Jdundee.jpg>
- ³¹ <http://trentonhistory.org/Made/Marks.htm>