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ALKALINE GLAZED POTTERY FROM SOUTH CAROLINA TO TEXAS

by Stanley South

Mrs. Georgeanna Greer of San Antonio, Texas, paid a research visit to the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology regarding her study of alkaline glazed pottery. From her research into the history of nineteenth century potters in Texas, she has found that in the early part of the century a number of these craftsmen went to Texas from South Carolina. Characteristics of the ware made by these potters are a high-fired body and the use of glossy glazes made of ashes and clay. Mrs. Greer has found that she can duplicate these glazes by using a sandy clay, salt, and oak ashes, or any wood or grass ash, even Johnson grass ashes. The salt can be omitted and a mixture of half ashes and half clay can be used to produce the glaze so often seen on high-fired pottery from the South. The use of salt as an ingredient in a glaze, along with clay, and ashes was known as early as 1794, when they were used at Salem, North Carolina, by the potter Rudolph Christ to make a faience glaze using tin ash. Mrs. Greer is searching for answers relating to origin and distribution of the concept of using the simple ingredients, ashes and clay, to produce glaze for ware fired to stoneware hardness.

Through research and archeology conducted by Stanley South, Archeologist, with the Institute, into the ware made at Salem, North Carolina, by potters Gottfried Aust and Rudolph Christ, it appears that the alkaline glazed ware may have been introduced into Salem by William Ellis in 1774. Ellis was a potter who had worked at the Bartlam factory in Charleston, which was begun in 1770.

Mrs. Greer, accompanied by her daughter, paid a very profitable visit to the Charleston Museum, where she was able to study a number of fine pieces of the alkaline glazed ware, many with dates and names of the makers from the early nineteenth century. Mr. South accompanied Mrs. Greer to the Pottersville Museum in Edgefield, owned by the family of Ralph McClendon, where a number of fine pieces of alkaline glazed ware are on exhibit. Photographs were taken of some of the vessels for comparison with examples known to have been made in Texas by potters who went there from the Edgefield district of South Carolina. A kiln site of a potter of the mid-nineteenth century was visited, and several fragments of the kiln wasters were collected.

The visit of Mrs. Greer (who is a pediatrician) is a most important one to those interested in the history of colonial ceramics in the South. The alkaline glazed ware is known to have been made extensively in South Carolina in the nineteenth century, as well as elsewhere in the South. The origins for this type glaze appear to have been in the Carolinas, possibly with South Carolina potters of the English tradition. Much more research must yet be done to answer some of the questions being asked by Mrs. Greer, and through the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology, the South Carolina story will be compiled by Stanley South and coordinated with Mrs. Greer's research. From this cooperative effort, more information should emerge on this most fascinating inquiry into the past.
Fig. 1. A jug and jar of alkaline glazed ware made in South Carolina (from the collection of Mrs. Georgeanna Greer).

(Fig. 2. Mrs. Georgeanna Greer of San Antonio, Texas, examines an alkaline glazed vessel with John Combes, Assistant Director of the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology (center), and Stanley South, Archeologist (right).
Mrs. Greer returned to South Carolina in October to attend the Conference on Historic Sites Archeology and present a paper on this alkaline glazed pottery. At this time she left some type samples of the material at the Institute for study and comparative research.

The Department of Anthropology and Sociology has indeed taken a major step forward this year by adding two anthropologists to the staff with an additional one to be added at the second semester. This brings to three, the number of anthropologists in the department including Mr. Donald R. Sutherland who has been the only anthropologist on the staff for the past three years. Beginning this fall semester the department has 17 anthropology majors and is growing rapidly. The additional staff and prospects has required that the curriculum in anthropology be completely revised and this is being done. Revisions are already in effect and the complete revision will be ready for next fall.

Dr. Thomas J. Price joined the departmental staff in September as Associate Professor of anthropology. He received his Doctorate in anthropology from Northwestern University and taught for several years at Queens College. Recently he has been Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at Williams College in Massachusetts. His basic research interest is in general ethnology. He specialized in Afro-American studies and secondarily Latin American studies, and has worked with Negro communities in Honduras, Colombia, and Surinam. He has immediately embarked upon a study of Negro communities in the South Carolina Sea Islands.

Mr. Ted A. Rathbun joined the departmental staff in September as Instructor. Ted comes to us from the University of Kansas where he expects to receive his Ph.D. in 1971. He is a physical anthropologist with strong interests in archeology and middle Eastern ethnology. He has done research in physical anthropology on Plains Indian materials from the River Basin Surveys Program and has spent two seasons in middle Eastern research. In the latter he assisted Dr. William Bass in cemetery excavations at the site of Hassenlu in Iran and is assisting in the analyses of the skeletal remains.

We welcome both Tom and Ted aboard and are pleased to be able to add them to the Institute's staff of collaborators.

Donald Sutherland has defended his dissertation and will receive his Ph.D. from Tulane this May. Congratulations, Don.