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## COMMENT ON ALKALINE GLAZED STONEWARE FROM VARIOUS STATES

Stanley South, Editor

North Carolina, South Carolina

A comment on the clues to the possible origin of alkaline glazed stoneware in South Carolina and North Carolina have been presented by this writer in a separate paper of this forum. Not mentioned in that paper is the wealth of information waiting to be examined relative to alkaline glazed stoneware made by North Carolina potters, in particular, in Jugtown, North Carolina, near Seagrove.

Georgia

Dr. Greer has mentioned the fact that alkaline glazed stoneware is still being made in Georgia and she is continuing her research into the potters and sites in that state.

Florida

Ripley Bullen of the Florida State Museum has written a comment on alkaline glazed stoneware in Florida which appears as a separate paper in the forum.

Alabama

Craig Sheldon and Jerry Nielsen of the Archeological Museum at Mound State Monument, Moundville, Alabama, feel that:

Primarily, the paper fails to adequately define what is alkaline glazed pottery. That is to say that at no point in the paper is there a good concise definition of the pottery which allows us to recognize the ware in our collections. Dr. Greer states that, 'The color and texture of the glaze are the most positive points of identification'. Then she goes on to describe the colors as:

'...dirty cream through yellows and browns to occasional black ....often opaque... (to) pale greens, blue greens, and grays, to deep olive greens and greenish black.... (to) red... associated with brown.', (page 10-11).

(All these colors being for oxidized and reduced glazes). This is a rather lengthy and varied list of colors to be a positive identification factor. As for the texture Dr. Greer states the surface of the glaze:

'...may show a very smooth and shiny texture or be rough and show a sort of agglutination or clumping, much heavier and less regular than that of a salt glaze.', (page 10).

Again the diagnostic criterion are somewhat broad and vague.

For persons less familiar with historic ceramics in particular glazed stonewares than Dr. Greer, we feel that more definite description is necessary for the reader before an attempt is made to give a history of the development of glazes and technical aspects of stoneware manufacture.

Using Dr. Greer's description of alkaline glazed stoneware, an attempt was made to recognize specimens of the ware in collections of historic ceramics recovered from the site of the French Fort Conde recently excavated by the University of Alabama. Mr. Sheldon and I were unable to identify alkaline glazed sherds using Dr. Greer's criteria.

With regards to the remainder of the paper it is most informative, and presents a good concise description of glazed stoneware pottery, its development, and technical aspects.

### Tennessee

Richard Polhemus has worked in Tennessee on Cherokee Indian sites and is now Laboratory Supervisor for the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology at the University of South Carolina. His comment follows:

I have read with interest the paper on alkaline glaze stoneware by Dr. Greer. She has made an important contribution to the study of 19th century ceramics in the southern United States. I trust further contributions on this interesting subject will follow.

Although a small number of alkaline glaze stoneware sherds have been found on early 19th century sites in Tennessee, no kiln sites for this ware have been located. Three kiln sites which have been located in upper east Tennessee produced salt glaze stoneware decorated with cobalt blue and lead glaze earthenware. The salt glaze stonewares produced by D. Decker near Greenville, Tennessee, included jugs, crocks, harvest jugs, chicken drinkers, spittoons, banks, tile, stove flues, caps, pipes, and two forms of tombstones. This pottery dated from 1872 to about 1905. The kiln site producing the lead glaze earthenware has not been closely examined by either Mr. Beverly Burbage or myself. Mr. Burbage is presently doing research on the Decker pottery.

Alkaline glaze stoneware sherds were found associated with polychrome painted pearlware and blue edge ware during excavation of a settler's cabin on the Holston River in upper east Tennessee. Sherds of alkaline glaze stoneware also occur at several late Cherokee sites in the Little Tennessee River valley associated with Clews dark blue transfer printed pearlware, polychrome painted pearlware, and blue edge ware - dating after 1819 but prior to 1838 when the Cherokee

occupation was terminated by the Trail of Tears.

Alkaline glaze stoneware does not seem to have been produced in east Tennessee. The occurrence of only minor numbers of fragments in contrast to the predominant salt glaze and Albany slip wares suggests that east Tennessee was more closely associated with the North than other southern states.

Routine laboratory work at the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology has resulted in the classification of a large quantity of 19th century ceramics. The laboratory crew readily sorted out the alkaline glaze stoneware from other stonewares during this work, even prior to a visit by Dr. Greer. Although we had no precise name for the sherds or glaze, it was classified separately from the other stonewares. At times it appeared that sherds from several individual potteries or groups of potteries might be recognizable in our samples. I feel that this is a distinct possibility after we have investigated a number of identified kiln sites in South Carolina and accumulate large kiln samples on which to work.

The most difficult variation to recognize appears to be underfired, light green to grey-green in color and having numerous unvitified sand particles in the glaze - these producing a rough surface rather than the normal smooth glass-like surface found on most alkaline glaze stoneware. This variation was sometimes classified as salt glazed at first glance although close examination readily disclosed the slightly protruding sand grains rather than the pitting which is present on salt glaze stoneware.

### Mississippi

Richard A. Marshall of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Mississippi State University reports that a pottery is operating presently in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, known as the Sheerwater Pottery (Box 737, Ocean Springs). The Mississippi Geological Survey, Bulletin No. 6, lists a number of potteries which were operating during the early 1900's, the "slip-type" glaze being the most common type used at that time.

### Arkansas

William A. Westbury of the University of Arkansas Museum has sent photographs of vessels in storage at the Museum that are part of a large collection of materials given the Museum by Mrs. Maude Henderson of Fort Smith, Arkansas. A fragment of kiln furniture of alkaline glazed stoneware found at the Cane Hill Pottery which was in existence from roughly 1867 to 1887 was also reported by Dr. Westbury. However, he also reports that pots from the factory are either unglazed or salt glazed. Some of the Arkansas Post materials from excavations at Arkansas Post National Memorial appear to be alkaline glazed stoneware.

The photographs of the pots in the University of Arkansas Museum are shown in Figures 1 through 4, and a description by Dr. Westbury with editorial comments by South follow:

- Figure 1 This vessel has a glaze which is quite rough. It can be felt with the fingers quite easily. The interior of this piece is also glazed. Colour is 5Yr 2/1 on the Munsell Soil Colour Chart. No. 54-1-283.

[This roughness from the puddling and running of the alkaline glaze is typical of alkaline glazed stoneware pieces.]

- Figure 2 This light vessel is glazed on the exterior, but has lost a great deal of the glaze around the rim through what appears to be flaking. Colour is 2.5Y 6/2 on the Munsell Soil Colour Chart. No. 54-1-295.

[This light vessel with running streaks of glaze of a slightly darker color is also typical of the lighter "celadon" appearing alkaline glazed stoneware vessels.]

- Figure 3 The glaze is soft and satiny in appearance. The bottom of the vessel has wipe marks where the glaze was wiped off while it was wet. The interior of the vessel is not glazed but does show run marks where some of the glaze ran into it. Colour is 7.5R 3/2 on the Munsell Soil Colour Chart. No. 54-1-293.

[This lustrous jug is typical of Albany slipped vessels. Notice the absence of the typical alkaline glazed runs on the exterior surface, and the uniform appearance of the opaque slip glaze.]

- Figure 4 The glaze on this vessel is quite poor, with areas which are unglazed. Run marks are on both the interior and the exterior of the vessel. The bottom shows wipe marks where the vessel was wiped before firing the glaze. Colour on the Munsell Soil Colour Chart is 10R. No. 54-1-306.

[This vessel also is an Albany slip glazed vessel. However, it was also apparently glazed with an overcoating of alkaline glaze, as evidenced by the runs and bare spots mentioned by Dr. Westbury and seen in the lower left side of the jug. This combination Albany slip and alkaline glaze sometimes occurs in a very selected manner on the surface of the vessels. Where a blast of hotter air sometimes hits an Albany slipped vessel for instance, the result is an alkaline glazed spot over Albany slip. Apparently the more extreme heat will catalize the



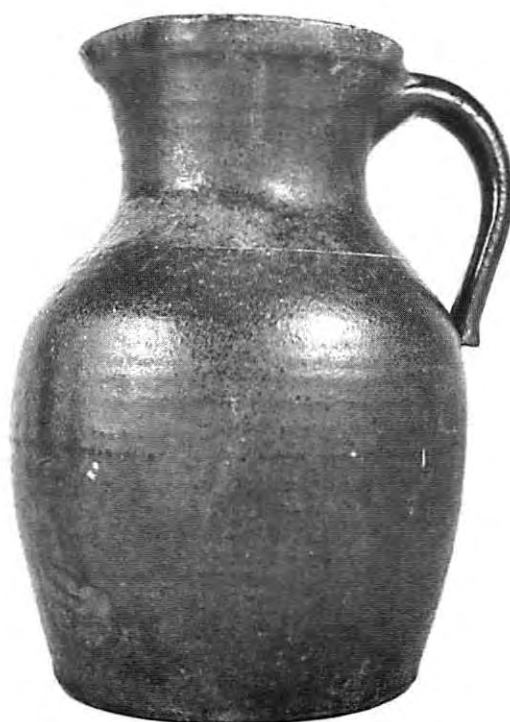
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2



3



4

ingredients of Albany slipped vessels. Then too, the practice of combining the opaque, even, brown of Albany slip with a more glossy alkaline over-glaze may have been practiced by some potters as a more desirable combination than Albany or alkaline glazes alone could produce.]

### Summary

From these comments of archeologists working with nineteenth century ceramics in the South, we see that there is a need for more work with the use of the direct historical approach from the present potters and the documents to the alkaline glazed stoneware sites of the nineteenth century. Through the excavation of documented sites with known time brackets, we will be able to define various specific ceramic types in a pinpointing manner. The knowledge of specific wares may well provide the key for temporarily fixing sites more effectively than is now the case by using general English and American ceramics alone. These local potters may provide the time markers in a specific manner not often found in the more universally distributed ceramic types.

Interpretations of life styles, socio-economic levels, cultural adaptation to the environment, architectural horizon studies, acculturation studies, and similar cultural phenomena build on a base of tradition, and tradition is anchored in a specific framework of time-space studies. This skeletal frame is made up of specific forms in time and space, often allowing an entire archeological complex to be related to forms that went before and came after. Alkaline glazed stoneware may well provide us with the means for locally building a more rigid framework upon which to prop our house of cards, to hang our cultural interpretations, and to indulge more freely our flights of fancy. The archeological process requires both the left hand of the cultural reconstructionists and the right hand of the potsherd analysts to effectively wash the data from an archeological site.